ICHARD PRIMUS: AMERICAN CONSTITUTIONS | TOM DELAY, THE GRAPHIC NOVELLA

THE NEW REPUBLIC

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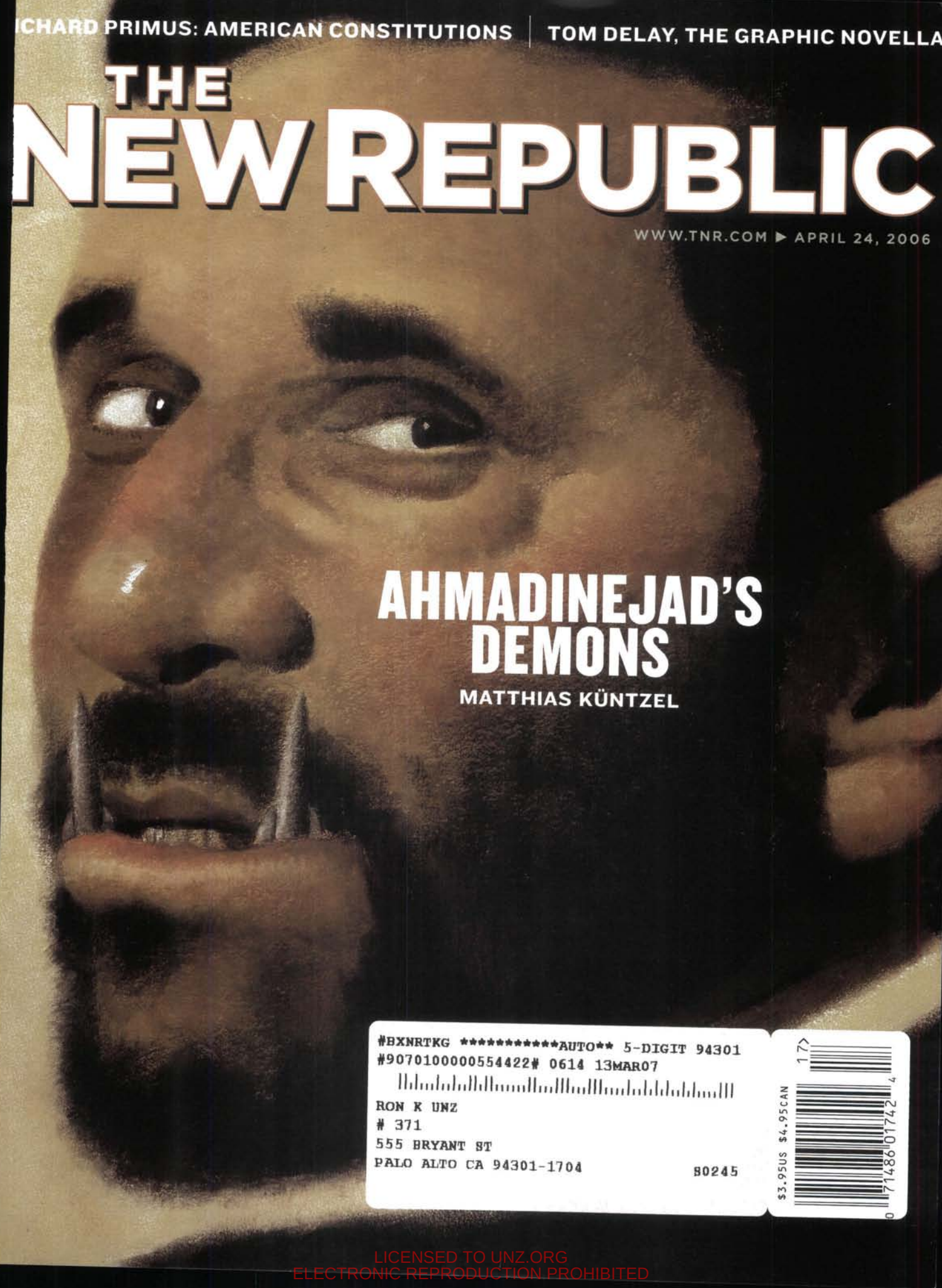

AHMADINEJAD'S DEMONS

MATTHIAS KÜNTZEL

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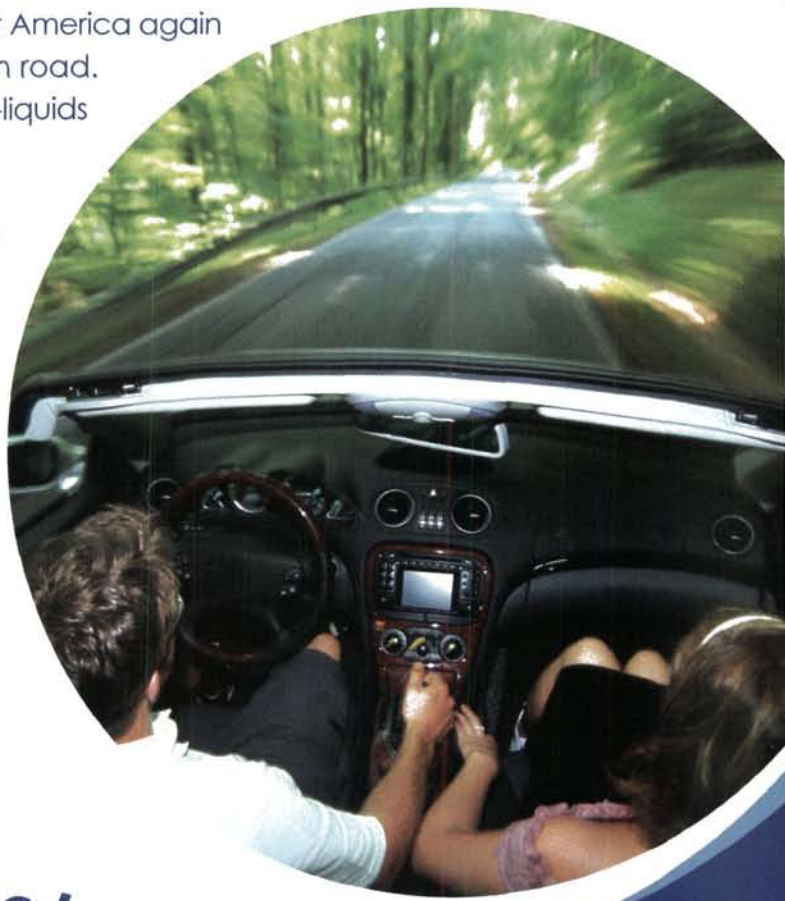

Yeah... coal can do that.

Peabody

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CoalCanDoThat.com

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THE NEW REPUBLIC
A JOURNAL OF POLITICS AND THE ARTS

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COVER PAINTING BY *Brad Holland*

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CORRESPONDENCE

EXPERT FLEECE

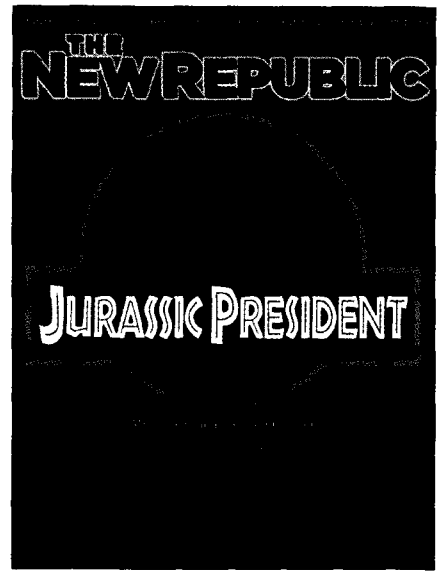
MICHAEL CROWLEY SAYS THAT Michael Crichton's novels are indictments of expertise—and that they have, as a hero, "the debunker, who uses his wits and untainted eyes to see through the hokum perpetuated by PhDs" ("Jurassic President," March 20 & 27). But the hero/debunker of *State of Fear*, John Kenner, has a PhD and is a professor at MIT. In Crichton's novels *The Terminal Man*, *Jurassic Park*, and *Prey*, the heroes all have PhDs or MDs. Crichton is not championing the nonscientist in opposition to the scientist; he is championing the cautious and skeptical scientist. His novels do not indict the expertise of scientists, but rather their hubris. A recurring theme is that scientists overestimate what they understand, what they can predict, and what they can control. Crichton, as a graduate of Harvard Medical School, has the scientific training to critique research methodology. There are many scientists who share Crichton's skepticism about global warming. One of them, William Gray, a professor of atmospheric science at Colorado State University, also testified at the Senate hearing.

MARLA WARREN
Bartonville, Illinois

MICHAEL CROWLEY RESPONDS:
The debunker need not be a layman; he can be, and in Crichton's work often is, a renegade within the "expert" establishment. What is crucial about this figure is that he punctures the blind arrogance—and, yes, the hubris—of the experts. It is true, meanwhile, that some scientists share Crichton's skepticism about global warming. But they are a distinct minority (and they tend to be anti-establishment renegades themselves). As for William Gray, his Senate global warming testimony seemed underwhelming, to say the least, when it emerged that he had apparently never published a peer-reviewed article on the subject.

FIRST TIERNEY

NOAM SCHEIBER'S PUTDOWN OF one of the very few visible libertarian columnists in the country, John Tierney of *The New York Times*, reeks of



desperation ("Second Tierney," March 20 & 27). Tierney's is a civilized voice that, over the last several months, has produced a stream of difficult-to-answer critiques of the modern U.S. welfare state. And he has done this from a principled libertarian position, not in some haphazard, catch-as-catch-can fashion. For this, Scheiber calls Tierney's work "boring." The condescending piece's aim seems not to be exposing Tierney's misguided position or even his poor writing. No, the aim is to marginalize Tierney and his libertarian outlook.

Scheiber seems most annoyed that Tierney's columns all emanate from a principled, integrated political-economic viewpoint. Yet this has sting only because it is now fashionable to be pragmatic, uncommitted, flexible. (Let's call it what it is: wobbly.) That this approach has gained traction reveals some important developments in recent intellectual history, among them the onslaught of the earlier pragmatic philosophy of Charles Peirce, William James, and John Dewey—and, more recently, the radical pragmatism of Richard Rorty and his postmodernism. All of these have helped discourage respect for coherent, integrated, and principled thinking.

TIBOR R. MACHAN
Silverado, California

NOAM SCHEIBER'S PHILIPPIC AGAINST Tierney is just what we needed—more humorless liberal nitpicking. Does Scheiber know any congressmen who are *not* "corrupt, duplicitous, craven, and dim-witted"? How many fingers does he need to count them?

WM. B. FANKBONER
Indio, California

MALE UNKNOWN (TO ME)

JASON ZENGERLE SAYS THAT, IN THE documentary *Unknown White Male*, I appear "on-screen to explain that [Doug] Bruce likely suffers from an extremely rare condition known as retrograde amnesia" and that my comments "lend weight to Bruce's seemingly implausible tale" ("Brain Drain," April 3). In the film, I provide general background on memory and amnesia and raise the issue of faked amnesia, which is a frequent concern in cases like this. But I do not diagnose Bruce's condition, nor do I discuss the validity of his memory loss. I am in no position to do so, since I have not met Bruce.

DANIEL L. SCHACTER
Department of Psychology
Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts

TOOTHLESS REBUKE

PETER BEINART'S DEFENSE OF SENator Russell Feingold's proposal to censure President Bush for the warrant-

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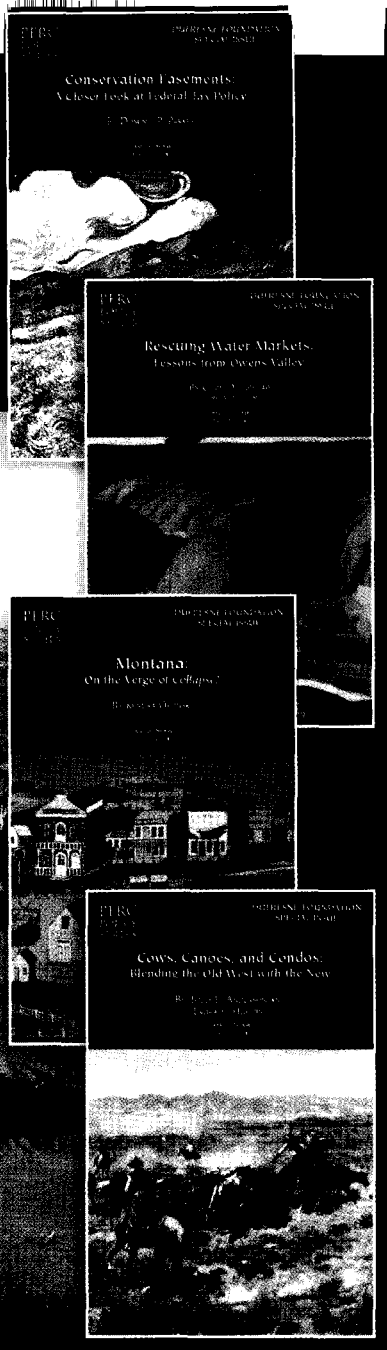
ARE THE NATURAL RESOURCES OF AMERICA'S "THIRD COAST" DISAPPEARING?



Americans love things Western. The spell of the West—the grand vistas, open ranges, and majestic waters—captures the hearts of many visitors. In fact, people are moving to the West in such numbers that the region has been called the third coast.

In the past, natural resources were widely abundant and the economies of the West depended on converting these resources into lumber, metals, and hydroelectricity. More recently, as more people move West to enjoy its beauty, the relationship between the economy and the environment has moved from extraction toward resource protection.

Finding a new balance between the production of commodities and the preservation of the West's natural beauty will benefit all Americans. PERC, the Property and Environment Research Center, is exploring such issues through its "Wealth of Nature" series of publications.

PERC is the nation's oldest and largest nonprofit institute dedicated to improving environmental quality through markets. For more than a quarter-century, our researchers have worked to find innovative ways to protect our natural resources. We urge you to take a look at what PERC has accomplished and join us in our efforts.

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When Right Is Wrong

TRB FROM WASHINGTON

I THINK JOHN MCCAIN IS MAKING a big mistake. And I'm not just saying that because I'm a liberal. McCain—as every political junkie knows—has been aggressively mending fences with the conservative establishment he once loathed. He's giving the commencement address at Jerry Falwell's Liberty University; he has endorsed South Dakota's anti-abortion law and the teaching of creationism in schools; he has lavishly praised President Bush; he has even lavishly praised President Bush's *parents*.

The strategy is simple. When he ran for president in 2000, McCain steamrolled Bush among Independents but lost, because he got creamed among Republicans. With some states moving to make it harder for non-Republicans to vote in GOP primaries, he would likely do even worse in 2008. If McCain leaves a big hole on his right, the early primaries will probably whittle the field down to him and someone more conservative, as they did in 2000. And, when the party's base consolidates around Mr. X, Mr. X will be almost impossible to beat.

If, on the other hand, McCain makes sure there is no Mr. X, he can win. Recent GOP history shows that you don't have to be beloved by the conservative base to claim the nomination; you just have to be acceptable. In 1988, movement conservatives didn't swoon over George H.W. Bush. In 1996, they didn't swoon over Bob Dole. But Bush and Dole passed enough litmus tests and won enough endorsements to prevent the right from consolidating around anyone else. Like Democrats, Republicans seek ideological purity. But, unlike Democrats, they respect hierarchy. Bush and Dole were next in line, and, once they proved ideologically acceptable enough, order prevailed.

In his quest to become ideologically acceptable, McCain has several things going for him. For starters, as Byron York has noted in these pages ("Fortunate Son," December 12, 2005), the issue that drove the right berserk in 2004—McCain's support for campaign finance reform—is old news now. Second, a huge new issue has emerged—the war on terrorism—on which McCain's hawkishness suits the Republican base. Third, with the deficit exploding, the right is moving away from its cut-taxes-and-the-deficit-be-damned stance of a few years ago and back toward the anti-deficit posture it assumed in the mid-'90s. (For more than two decades now, these phases have followed one another as night follows day: Republicans pass massive tax cuts, saying that deficits don't really matter. Then, once deficits get big enough, they shift course and downplay tax-cutting in favor of deficit-reduction—until the deficit goes down, at which time the cycle begins again). Since McCain is more a deficit hawk than a tax-cutter, he's more in tune with the conservative base today than he was in 2000—when all Republicans could think about was how to free multi-millionaires from the estate tax.

So McCain may well succeed and become the candidate of the Republican establishment. The problem is that, in 2008, that could be a poisoned chalice. For starters, parties have enormous difficulty winning three straight presidential elections. In the last half-century, Richard Nixon (1960), Hubert Humphrey (1968), Gerald Ford (1976), and Al Gore (2000) have failed. Only George H. W. Bush (1988) succeeded. Even in the best of circumstances, the public grows tired of one-party rule. And, for the GOP, 2008 will almost certainly not be the best of circumstances. Today, public alienation is as high as at any time since 1994. And, unlike 1994, things are not likely to improve. The single biggest reason is Iraq, which won't go away any time soon, and, tragically, is more likely to get worse than better. What's more, George W. Bush's rapidly approaching lame-duck status, and the increasing power of congressional Democrats, means legislative gridlock and congressional investigations are highly likely for the next two and a half years.

The best precedent for the coming period is the mid-'70s, when military defeat combined with political scandal to produce an unusually foul public mood. At such moments, outsiders do best. In 1976, Jimmy Carter became the first anti-Washington candidate elected president since the beginning of the cold war. And, in 2008, anti-Washington populism will likely play extremely well again. Since early 2002, the percentage of Americans expressing an unfavorable view of the GOP has risen 20 points, and, strikingly, the percentage expressing an unfavorable view of Democrats has risen 9 points as well.

In 2000, anti-Washington populism was McCain's forte. Describing his battle against the political establishment, he called himself "Luke Skywalker fighting his way out of the Death Star." But, in 2008, if all goes according to plan, he'll be piloting the Death Star. It's not just that he'll be the Republican nominee. As part of his campaign to woo conservatives, he has embraced Bush so tightly that he will find it hard to portray himself as the candidate of radical change. And his pandering to the religious right has already undermined his reputation for fearless, damn-the-torpedoes truth-telling. It's one thing to say he's a social conservative; it's another to embrace figures like Falwell, whom the old John McCain clearly reviled.

Ideologically, the most fertile populist ground in 2008 will likely be antiwar and anti-immigration. That's where many of the old Ross Perot voters—who have been floating grumpily between the parties since the cold war's end—will likely be. McCain can't win them on issues—since he's a die-hard Iraq hawk and a high-minded immigration dove. He has to win them on style—on his image as a lone crusader fighting the corrupt fat cats in Washington. But that will be much harder if those fat cats are supporting his campaign.

So what should McCain do? He should still seek the Republican nomination—but take more care not to disfigure his public persona in the process. And, if he loses as a result, he should bolt the party, choose a respected Democrat as his running mate, and run as an Independent. To be sure, conventional wisdom says Independents can never win. But, in 2008, the public could be so alienated and the likely nominees so polarizing (think Hillary Clinton and George Allen) that it might just work. America's next president will likely be the candidate who best embodies change. And, in that environment, John McCain should think twice before turning himself into the candidate of more of the same.

PETER BEINART

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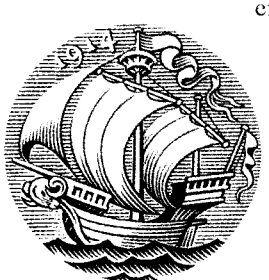
Mass Coverage

ALMOST NO ISSUE SCREAMS "Mommy Party" louder than health care—a consuming passion for the likes of Ted Kennedy and Hillary Clinton, but not Tom DeLay and George W. Bush. At least that was the stock portrayal of the issue—until last week. That's when Massachusetts reassumed its increasingly familiar role as the national detonator of taboo. This time, the commonwealth accomplished a feat even more daring than permitting grooms to wed grooms: Its rock-ribbed Republican governor, Mitt Romney, was seen blissfully embracing a version of universal health care.

Now, if we're precise, Romney didn't champion the brand of universal health care that this magazine stands behind. But we'll happily set aside those policy differences to revel in the aesthetic pleasures of the moment. Romney is a straight-laced conservative who has far more of a Sun Belt sensibility than a Boston one. He also happens to desperately crave the Republican presidential nomination. So, whether he's acting out of concern for his fellow human beings or merely reaching out to downscale Republican voters struggling with their own medical bills, it just doesn't matter to us. He's still lending the cause of health care reform a conservative imprimatur—making the world safe for, or at least more politically hospitable to, a policy revolution.

Of course, Democrats will always be the more vocal champions of universal health care. Any way you dress or undress the issue, it inevitably involves expanding government's reach. But Romney has begun to hint at an important new twist in the debate: the emergence of a genuinely conservative case for health care reform. Such a case would start with the ethic of personal responsibility. Because our society is unwilling to let dying people go without life-saving medical treatment, doctors and hospitals dole out billions in uncompensated care to the uninsured every year—a cost they inevitably pass on to the insured in the form of higher premiums and taxes. Yet there are always some people who could buy health insurance but don't, because they would rather spend the money elsewhere. Forcing these people to pay into the health care system—as Romney's plan demands—merely asks these "freeloaders" to carry their share of the load. Take that, Grover Norquist.

Republicans also fancy themselves the champions of small business. But a major selling point for universal health care is that it would encourage, rather than impede, entrepreneurship. Contrary to what lobbying groups like the National Federation of Independent Business say, the only way to make insurance both affordable and widely available to small businesses is to create large insurance pools, allowing them to take advantage of the economies of scale that large corporations now enjoy. Only the government can accomplish that.



And, speaking of corporate America, it, too, stands to benefit from universal health care. Today, companies pour good money after bad on futile efforts to squeeze employee health costs, supporting a tremendous infrastructure dedicated to the purchase and management of private health benefits. And, in the case of large manufacturers like the auto industry, they are locked into financing retiree benefits that cripple them in the global marketplace. The best universal health care plans would eliminate much of the infrastructure. Even more modest efforts, like the one Romney signed, would still distribute the cost burden more broadly while evening the economic playing field both at home and abroad.

We don't mean to oversell Romney's plan—something, surely, the governor will do all by himself in the course of his impending presidential run. In fact, the people of Massachusetts have a right to be wary. The heart of the plan is a requirement that every citizen buy health insurance, the same way states compel drivers to carry auto insurance. To help make insurance available, the law would create a cooperative through which individuals and small businesses could buy coverage at lower group rates, while also subsidizing insurance for the poor directly. But plenty could go wrong with this scheme. The subsidies could be too small and the insurance offered too meager, driving poor people into even steeper financial trouble; the funding for the plan, which already seems a bit shaky, could prove seriously inadequate. And, in any event, it's almost impossible to imagine a similar scheme working on the federal level, at least without a lot more money. But that's a debate over *how* to give everybody health insurance, not *whether*. And, thanks to Romney, it's a debate we're now more likely to have. ■

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THE HAMMER GETS NAILED

THE MEAN-SPIRITED RISE & WELL-DESERVED FALL OF TOM DELAY

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WITH MICHAEL CROWLEY

THE EXTERMINATOR

PLAGUED BY **INTERNAL CONTRADICTIONS** FROM A DYSFUNCTIONAL UPBRINGING YOUNG TOM DELAY FINDS SOME RELIEF IN HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL. LOVES KNOCKING PEOPLE DOWN.

EXTERMINATOR PROVES IDEAL FIRST PROFESSION, WITH ITS GOOD-VS-EVIL IDEOLOGICAL CLARITY.

TAKE **THAT**, YOU LIBERAL VERMIN!

EXTERMINATOR GOES TO AUSTIN

GOVERNMENT REGULATION OF PEST BUSINESS ATTRACTS HIM TO BIGGER ENEMIES.

ELECT

NO MORE GESTAPO EPA!

POLITICS PROVIDES LARGER VENUE ON WHICH TO PROJECT COMPULSIVE DRIVE AND INNER CONFLICT.

AS A TEXAS STATE LEGISLATOR, TOM QUICKLY ASSUMES A LEADERSHIP ROLE AS HARD-DRINKING NUMBER ONE PARTY BOY "HOT TUB TOM" AT "MACHO MANOR," HIS AUSTIN POLITICO FRATHOUSE CONDO.

EXTERMINATOR GOES TO WASHINGTON

ELECTED TO CONGRESS. TAKES UP RIGHT-WING CAUSES, RAILING AGAINST "SMUT" AT THE NEA. PLAYS BRIEFLY AT POPULISM, ATTACKING *THE* RICH TILL HE REALIZES WHERE HIS BREAD IS BUTTERED. MOSTLY, HE GETS DRUNK, DOWNING UP TO A DOZEN MARTINIS AT RECEPTIONS THEN HITTING THE BARS AT NIGHT TILL THEY CLOSE.

EPIPHANY

SHOWN A VIDEO OF EVANGELIST JAMES DOBSON ON FATHERHOOD AND PIETY, TOM HAS A TEARFUL REALIZATION

I'VE BEEN A JERK! ALL I'VE CARED ABOUT IS **ME, ME, ME!** FROM NOW ON, IT'LL BE GOD, GOD, GOD!

THE CLOSER HE GETS TO GOD, *THE* MORE HE KNOWS WHAT GOD IS THINKING.

WOW! GOD IS A RIGHT-WING REPUBLICAN! HE AGREES WITH ME ABOUT EVERYTHING!

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THE REVOLUTIONARY
TOM RISES IN RANKS OF REPUB MINORITY. MAD AT DEMOCRATIC LEADERS THEY SAY SHUT THEM OUT OF THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS, TOM AND COLLEAGUES, LIKE NEWT GINGRICH, ATTACK DEMOCRATS AS:
ARROGANT! BLOATED! CORRUPT! OUT OF TOUCH!
NOVEMBER, 1994: HOUSE REPUBS KICK DEMS OUT OF POWER AND TAKE OVER
FRUITS OF POWER
FINALLY IN POWER AS WHIP AND THEN MAJORITY LEADER, TOM "THE HAMMER" LEADS REPUBS TO IMITATE THE WORST TRAITS THEY CONDEMNED IN DEMOCRATS AND THEN GO MUCH FARTHER IN AN ERA OF GOVERNMENT-GONE-WILD.
I NEED YOUR VOTES TO PASS THIS BILL.
K STREET
MEANWHILE, TOM COMMANDEERS THE MONEY SPIGOT ON THE K STREET CORNUCOPIA AND EMBARKS ON ALLIANCE WITH SOON-TO-BE-INFAMOUS LOBBYIST TRICKY JACK ABRAMOFF.
AND TOM AND JACK HAD A BALL!...
...UNTIL THEIR FALL...
...AFTER WHICH, TOM REFLECTS ON THE PROFOUND LESSON HE'S LEARNED FROM HIS RECKLESS, RAMPANT ABUSE OF POWER.
THE LIBERALS DID IT!

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Joe Klein, man out of *Time*.

Primary Errors

BY JONATHAN CHAIT

TEN YEARS AGO, Joe Klein published *Primary Colors*, a roman à clef about Bill Clinton's 1992 campaign, and it was a massive sensation. For months, the chattering classes in Washington and New York chattered about little else, and the anonymity of the author sparked a Deep Throat–like manhunt. (*The Washington Post* unmasked Klein after tracking down a manuscript with the author's scribblings in the margins and having a handwriting expert match it with Klein's.) The book was a runaway best-seller, earning Klein more than $6 million in royalties, including a lucrative movie deal. It was not mere gimmickry that made the reception so rapturous. In many ways, it has held up as the defining book about the Clinton era, capturing the combination of idealism, personal weakness, charisma, and fierce intelligence of the forty-second president—and the tortured loyalties of those around him.

Klein has just published another book, *Politics Lost: How American Democracy Was Trivialized by People Who Think You're Stupid*, which may, in its own way, be the defining book of the Bush era. It will not immediately strike readers thusly. Indeed, Klein's latest book has very little to say about the defining traumas of the last five years: the bungled Iraq war, the disdain for expertise and qualifications in government, the corruption of public policy. But these omissions are, in a perverse sort of way, precisely the reasons for the book's significance. It is an inadvertent description of the news media's disengagement in the age of Bush.

The theory outlined in Klein's book will be familiar to readers of his *Time* columns or watchers of his regular appearances on "Meet the Press." Politics, he writes, "has become overly cautious, cynical, mechanistic, and bland." It needs less boredom and more spontaneity, color, and charisma. The bulk of the book consists of his recounting of various presidential campaigns over the last three decades. The highlight is Robert Kennedy's moving, off-the-cuff speech in Indianapolis announcing the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. The low point is John Kerry's dismal, overly scripted 2004 campaign. (Unfortunately for Klein's premise, which postulates a steady decline, the two most spontaneous campaigns he describes—John McCain in 2000 and Howard Dean in 2004—took place within the last two election cycles.) He closes with a rousing call for a politician "[w]ho believes in at least one idea, or program, that has less than 40 percent support in the polls. Who can tell a joke—at his own expense, if possible. Who gets angry, within reason; gets weepy, within reason . . . but only if those emotions are rare and real. Who is capable of a spontaneous, untrammeled belly laugh." In fact, we have a president right now who does all those things. (There's hardly a Bush idea these days that *does* crack 40 percent in the polls.) Somehow, though, these are not the best of times in American politics. Which suggests that having authentic, regular-guy candidates may not be the cure-all that Klein envisions it to be.

AGAIN AND AGAIN, Bush has exposed the limits of Klein's theater-critic interpretation of politics. In 1999, marveling over Bushian slogans like "no child left behind," Klein gushed in *The New Yorker* that the Texas governor represented "the first significant Republican rebellion against the Reagan template." In Bush, he found the Republican counterpart to the Clintonian Third Way.

The evidence might not have been obvious, but Klein was discovering signs of it everywhere, however subtle they may have been. Take, for instance, a missive Klein filed for *The New Yorker* from the 2000 GOP convention. He began by describing a dull foreign policy panel discussion, in which the members all "bore a slight resemblance to the caricatures of snooty, fur-collared bankers" from the 1930s. Klein then broadened out to his larger point:

> The panel was reassuring on several counts. For one thing, it was too dull to be anything but real. Furthermore, unlike many Republican policy forums in recent years, it wasn't at all angry. But, most important, it revealed an essential truth about the current Bush project. This is not a new Republican party but a souped-up version of a previous one: the very proper, mostly eastern-establishment party of the Eisenhower era.

It may have seemed like a stretch to infer some deeper conclusion about the GOP's ideological direction from the looks of some panelists at a nominating convention. And, if one was to draw such an inference, it's puzzling to interpret a resemblance to snooty Depression-era bankers (who, after all, had notoriously reactionary political views) as evidence of moderation, rather than the opposite.

Yet nothing could shake Klein from his theory. Not even Bush's decision to bring on non–compassionate conservative Dick Cheney. "Anybody who tries to take a really strong position on [Cheney] from the left or from the right seems kind of silly," Klein said of Bush's vice presidential selection on a "Meet the Press" panel. "We're all Clintonians now. Everybody is a Third Way Democrat or Republican, you know, and I think that that's one of the central problems that politicians in both parties face right now, is that there are no huge differences, or at least very few."

And then, after the election, Klein predicted that the result would be "a quiet, patient, and persistent bipartisanship," with no big tax cuts or Supreme Court ideologues. Klein suggested helpfully, "Bush could easily retain Lawrence Summers at Treasury and Richard Holbrooke at the United Nations." And this scenario could have easily come

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to pass, provided every other Cabinet-eligible American citizen had been wiped out in a nuclear holocaust.

How could Klein, and the other centrist pundits who argued along similar lines, have misjudged Bush and Cheney so badly? The answer is a disdain for policy details. In his book, Klein describes pollster Mark Penn as a "drop-dead policy wonk." That a pollster like Penn is his idea of a policy wonk reveals a lot. Klein swooned over Bush's "faith-based initiative," though the program's pitiful scale should have made it obvious that it did not amount to any serious break with the party. Klein is more idea-driven than most of the centrist pundits, but his interest in ideas is confined to abstractions and symbolism. He is Karl Rove's ideal mark.

There are also Klein's ideological prejudices, which pop up throughout his book. Like other centrist pundits, he has a disdain for populism. Unlike the others, he makes his disdain explicit rather than simply assuming it as an unquestionable truth. "The least successful form of populism," writes Klein in his book, "is [Bob] Shrum's economic class warfare, which has only received majority support during tough times, like the Great Depression." (Harry Truman? Lyndon Johnson? Al Gore plus Ralph Nader?) Klein argues that Democrats would win more elections if they focused on gun control and global warming, favored issues of the latte set. I'm tempted to suggest that the set of issues Klein derides in the book as "jobs, health-care, and blah-blah-blah" has some resonance with the segment of the voting public that doesn't lead the privileged lifestyle of a multimillionaire author and TV pundit. But that would sound populist.

Of course, there's nothing wrong with a little healthy skepticism of the redistributionary impulse. Unfortunately, Klein doesn't distinguish between populism and mere opposition to oligarchism. When Gore tried to make a campaign issue of his opponent's attachment to "Big tobacco, big oil, the big polluters, the pharmaceutical companies, the HMOs," the centrist pundits derided him as a latter-day William Jennings Bryan. ("Gore has been forced into this weird people-versus-the-powerful kind of populism," complained Klein at the time.) As it happens, though, Bush has given all those industries enormous influence over public policy, as manifested in the energy and Medicare bills, which amounted to exercises in corporate welfare of unprecedented scale. Klein's ideology, while not entirely wrong, has come at the worst possible time. The economic anti-populist in the age of Bush is like the pacifist during the 1940s.

Indeed, Klein's pious calls for moderation on all sides have a certain disembodied, Neville Chamberlain feel. "Both parties swan toward their extremes," his book laments, which would come as a shock to anybody who compares the Democrats' 2004 platform to the 1980 or 1972 version. In Klein's worldview, it's almost as if the Bush presidency never happened. And, given Klein's record of reading the forty-third president, you can't blame him for wishing it didn't. ■

Howard Dean's messiah complex.

Scream II

BY NOAM SCHEIBER

Last year, a major Democratic donor from the 2004 presidential campaign received a call from some operatives at Howard Dean's Democratic National Committee (DNC). Dean was coming to town in a few days, they told him, and they wanted to schedule a meeting. Political fund-raisers normally make such calls a month in advance, and so the seat-of-the-pants approach didn't go over well. "You can't call me the week before and say, 'Hey ... we'll be there Monday, want to hang out?' " says the donor. "They had all these fucking hippies. ... These are people that are great to raise a few $500 checks, plan a party at a nightclub. But they're not the folks you need to give you [the resources] to do the things you want to do."

Up until recently, the DNC was the last place you'd expect to find such amateurism. Dean's immediate predecessor, Terry McAuliffe, learned his craft from legendary House Democratic moneyman Tony Coelho in the 1980s, then went on to become "the greatest fund-raiser in the history of the universe," as Al Gore has claimed. McAuliffe once grappled with a 280-pound gator to seal a contribution from a Florida Indian tribe; he has passed many a "three-brunch, three-lunch day," as *The Washington Post* has put it, frolicking among donors. Not surprisingly, McAuliffe believed his job as DNC chairman consisted mainly of one responsibility: stockpiling money for the upcoming presidential election. And he was fabulously successful at it. In 2004 alone, McAuliffe raised roughly $350 million, helping the DNC out-raise its GOP counterpart for the first time ever.

But, of course, we all knew Howard Dean wasn't going to spend his afternoons sipping Bloody Marys with the Diners Club set. In a sense, that was exactly the point. This was a man who, after all, based his insurgent presidential campaign on bashing the party's Washington mandarins. What's so remarkable about Dean's brief tenure at the DNC is not that he's stayed true to his populist roots. It's that he's actually turned the most insider institution in all of Democratic politics into a weapon in his battle against the party establishment.

Symbolic of Dean's early efforts to remake the DNC was a man named Lindsay Lewis. Lewis had spent most of the 1990s as a fund-raiser for Dick Gephardt before eventually signing on as a mid-level Dean staffer in 2003. After Dean dropped out of the Democratic primaries, he hired Lewis to oversee fund-raising for his grassroots organization, Democracy for

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America. "There weren't a lot of people dying to live in Burlington, Vermont, at that point in time," is how one former Dean campaign official explains the hiring.

Dean sprung Lewis from Burlington to be the DNC's finance director in early 2005. Not long after, Lewis and his team kicked off their cultural revolution with a purge, sidelining key McAuliffe-era staffers. "They didn't include a lot of the old gang ... in any meetings, planning," says one former DNC official. "A lot of them got frustrated and left." (Lewis says most staffers had decided to leave before he arrived.)

But it quickly became clear that Lewis's staff had little clue about how to court wealthy donors, which accounted for over $100 million of McAuliffe's 2004 haul. "One day, I ran into one of the people in finance—the high-dollar folks," says a McAuliffe holdover not directly involved in raising money. "I said, 'How's it going?' They said, 'We've got a lot of work to do to teach these people about grassroots fundraising.' I said, 'You're in [high-dollar work]. What are you talking about?' It was the disconnect of a young kid who didn't understand the business." Some major donors also became disenchanted. "I don't think [Lewis] had the right staff in place at the time to move the agenda forward," says Chris Korge, the granddaddy of Florida donors.

A big part of the problem is Dean himself. Unlike McAuliffe, Dean had little entrée into the world of big-time Democratic donors when he took over as chairman; most of the money he had raised for his presidential campaign had come from small, online contributions. Culturally, too, Dean remains the antithesis of a Washington eminence. He still resides in Vermont, and, unlike McAuliffe, who owns a home in McLean, Virginia, Dean stays at a hotel during the night or two a week he's in town. You could stake out powerbroker haunts like the Capital Grille or the Caucus Room for weeks before ever seeing him.

Little surprise, then, that Dean's fund-raising take proved disappointing in 2005. True, the DNC's $56 million was $12 million more than the party had raised during the last nonelection year. But McAuliffe didn't build the party's massive donor list until 2004. The more useful measure is the relative drop-off among the two parties from 2004 to 2005. The RNC fell off by about $180 million; the DNC dropped nearly $300 million.

ONCE EVERY FOUR to six weeks, Dean sits down somewhere on Capitol Hill with the two most powerful Democrats in Washington, Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi. One topic of conversation comes up regularly: the DNC's spending priorities. Reid and Pelosi believe the party may be poised to win back Congress after over a decade in the wilderness. They want Dean to pony up for the cause. Dean's response to their invitation is invariably the same, according to a senior Democratic congressional staffer who has attended the meetings. "He'll say, 'I hear you. But that's the problem with Democrats. We have to think big.' "

It's fitting that the idea animating Dean's tenure at the DNC is a big one. Dean, after all, effectively sacrificed his future presidential ambitions to pursue his current job. The only reason he would do such a thing is that he considers the DNC post more important than even the presidency. And, in some ways, it is. Dean's goal is nothing less than saving the party by laying the groundwork for a future Democratic majority. The way he has pursued it is by giving states money and power that Washington had been hogging for decades. Not long after taking over at the DNC, for example, Dean quickly committed millions to hiring operatives—organizers, strategists, spokesmen—in each of the 50 states that didn't already have these personnel.

Dean's approach has a powerful logic to it. Consider a state like Texas. In 2004, the political birthplace of George W. Bush became a majority minority state. But, because the Texas Democratic Party was basically defunct—it didn't boast a single full-time staffer—Democrats had next to no ability to reach out to the local black and Latino population. Since 2005, however, the DNC has hired three permanent staffers in Texas, who have in turn recruited dozens of local volunteers. The state is unlikely to swing Democratic in 2008. But there's no reason it couldn't do so by 2020.

Of course, no one objects to building up parties in, say, the eight or ten red states where it's likely to have the most effect. The skepticism relates to Dean's all-or-nothing approach. "You can't sacrifice '08 for the benefit of 20 years from now," says Korge, who is generally supportive of Dean. "The country just cannot afford it." Dean recently generated some good buzz by replacing Lewis with a fund-raiser named Carl Chidlow. But even the well-respected Chidlow has had trouble overcoming these concerns.

AT HEART, DEAN'S persistent messianism is simply at odds with the DNC chairman's traditional role as loyal servant to the eventual Democratic nominee. Several months ago, one top Democratic fund-raiser took him aside and explained that the DNC wouldn't raise much money unless Dean committed himself to making an endless stream of self-abasing phone calls. "He was not argumentative," says this person. "But I didn't feel, after that, that he was willing or capable of making those calls. ... He was more interested in seeing who can do this for me."

One way or another, Dean's moment of truth will come in March 2008, when a Democrat effectively locks up the presidential nomination. If the past is any indication, the nominee will insist on boring in on the 20 or so states most likely to clinch 270 electoral votes. But Dean, according to those who know him, will continue to insist on funding his 50-state strategy. "Any Democrat running for president needs to understand that ... Howard is not going to throw that over the side of the ship," says Steve Grossman, a Dean ally and former DNC chairman. And if they don't? "It's going to be a tough conversation." ■

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A child of the Revolution takes over.

Ahmadinejad's Demons

BY MATTHIAS KÜNTZEL

DURING THE IRAN-IRAQ War, the Ayatollah Khomeini imported 500,000 small plastic keys from Taiwan. The trinkets were meant to be inspirational. After Iraq invaded in September 1980, it had quickly become clear that Iran's forces were no match for Saddam Hussein's professional, well-armed military. To compensate for their disadvantage, Khomeini sent Iranian children, some as young as twelve years old, to the front lines. There, they marched in formation across minefields toward the enemy, clearing a path with their bodies. Before every mission, one of the Taiwanese keys would be hung around each child's neck. It was supposed to open the gates to paradise for them.

At one point, however, the earthly gore became a matter of concern. "In the past," wrote the semi-official Iranian daily *Ettelaat* as the war raged on, "we had child-volunteers: 14-, 15-, and 16-year-olds. They went into the minefields. Their eyes saw nothing. Their ears heard nothing. And then, a few moments later, one saw clouds of dust. When the dust had settled again, there was nothing more to be seen of them. Somewhere, widely scattered in the landscape, there lay scraps of burnt flesh and pieces of bone." Such scenes would henceforth be avoided, *Ettelaat* assured its readers. "Before entering the minefields, the children [now] wrap themselves in blankets and they roll on the ground, so that their body parts stay together after the explosion of the mines and one can carry them to the graves."

These children who rolled to their deaths were part of the *Basiji*, a mass movement created by Khomeini in 1979 and militarized after the war started in order to supplement his beleaguered army. The *Basij Mostazafan*—or "mobilization of the oppressed"—was essentially a volunteer militia, most of whose members were not yet 18. They went enthusiastically, and by the thousands, to their own destruction. "The young men cleared the mines with their own bodies," one veteran of the Iran-Iraq War recalled in 2002 to the German newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine*. "It was sometimes like a race. Even without the commander's orders, everyone wanted to be first."

The sacrifice of the *Basiji* was ghastly. And yet, today, it is a source not of national shame, but of growing pride. Since the end of hostilities against Iraq in 1988, the *Basiji* have grown both in numbers and influence. They have been deployed, above all, as a vice squad to enforce religious law in Iran, and their elite "special units" have been used as shock troops against anti-government forces. In both 1999 and 2003, for instance, the *Basiji* were used to suppress student unrest. And, last year, they formed the potent core of the political base that propelled Mahmoud Ahmadinejad—a man who reportedly served as a *Basij* instructor during the Iran-Iraq War—to the presidency.

Ahmadinejad revels in his alliance with the *Basiji*. He regularly appears in public wearing a black-and-white *Basij* scarf, and, in his speeches, he routinely praises "*Basij* culture" and "*Basij* power," with which he says "Iran today makes its presence felt on the international and diplomatic stage." Ahmadinejad's ascendance on the shoulders of the *Basiji* means that the Iranian Revolution, launched almost three decades ago, has entered a new and disturbing phase. A younger generation of Iranians, whose worldviews were forged in the atrocities of the Iran-Iraq War, have come to power, wielding a more fervently ideological approach to politics than their predecessors. The children of the Revolution are now its leaders.

IN 1980, THE Ayatollah Khomeini called the Iraqi invasion of Iran a "divine blessing," because the war provided him the perfect opportunity to Islamize both Iranian society and the institutions of the Iranian state. As Saddam's troops pushed into Iran, Khomeini's fanatically devoted Revolutionary Guard moved rapidly to mobilize and prepare their air and sea forces. At the same time, the regime hastened to develop the *Basiji* as a popular militia.

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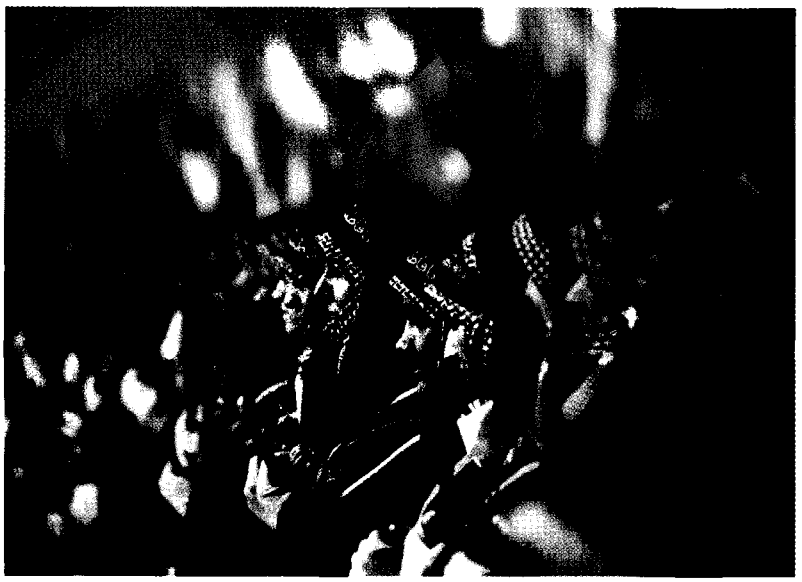

Basiji women formed part of a human chain 8,700 kilometers long last fall to support Iran's nuclear program.

Whereas the Revolutionary Guard consisted of professionally trained adult soldiers, the *Basiji* was essentially composed of boys between twelve and 17 and men over 45. They received only a few weeks of training—less in weapons and tactics than in theology. Most *Basiji* came from the countryside and were often illiterate. When their training was done, each *Basiji* received a blood-red headband that designated him a VOLUNTEER FOR MARTYRDOM. According to Sepehr Zabih's *The Iranian Military in Revolution and War*, such volunteers made up nearly one-third of the Iranian army—and the majority of its infantry.

The chief combat tactic employed by the *Basiji* was the human wave attack, whereby barely armed children and teenagers would move continuously toward the enemy in perfectly straight rows. It did not matter whether they fell to enemy fire or detonated the mines with their bodies: The important thing was that the *Basiji* continue to move forward over the torn and mutilated remains of their fallen comrades, going to their deaths in wave after wave. Once a path to the Iraqi forces had been opened up, Iranian commanders would send in their more valuable and skilled Revolutionary Guard troops.

This approach produced some undeniable successes. "They come toward our positions in huge hordes with their fists swinging," one Iraqi officer complained in the summer of 1982. "You can shoot down the first wave and then the second. But at some point the corpses are piling up in front of you, and all you want to do is scream and throw away your weapon. Those are human beings, after all!" By the spring of 1983, some 450,000 *Basiji* had been sent to the front. After three months, those who survived deployment were sent back to their schools or workplaces.

But three months was a long time on the front lines. In 1982, during the retaking of the city of Khorramshahr, 10,000 Iranians died. Following "Operation Kheiber," in February 1984, the corpses of some 20,000 fallen Iranians were left on the battlefield. The "Karbala Four" offensive in 1986 cost the lives of more than 10,000 Iranians. All told, some 100,000 men and boys are said to have been killed during *Basiji* operations. Why did the *Basiji* volunteer for such duty?

Most of them were recruited by members of the Revolutionary Guards, which commanded the *Basiji*. These "special educators" would visit schools and handpick their martyrs from the paramilitary exercises in which all Iranian youth were required to participate. Propaganda films—like the 1986 TV film *A Contribution to the War*—praised this alliance between students and the regime and undermined those parents who tried to save their children's lives. (At the time, Iranian law allowed children to serve even if their families objected.) Some parents, however, were lured by incentives. In a campaign called "Sacrifice a Child for the Imam," every family that lost a child on the battlefield was offered interest-free credit and other generous benefits. Moreover, enrollment in the *Basiji* gave the poorest of the poor a chance for social advancement.

Still others were coerced into "volunteering." In 1982, the German weekly *Der Spiegel* documented the story of a twelve-year-old boy named Hossein, who enlisted with the *Basiji* despite having polio:

> One day, some unknown imams turned up in the village. They called the whole population to the plaza in front of the police station, and they announced that they came with good news from Imam Khomeini: The Islamic Army of Iran had been chosen to liberate the holy city Al Quds—Jerusalem—from the infidels. ... The local mullah had decided that every family with children would have to furnish one soldier of God. Because Hossein was the most easily expendable for his family, and because, in light of his illness, he could in any case not expect much happiness in this life, he was chosen by his father to represent the family in the struggle against the infidel devils.

Of the 20 children that went into battle with Hossein, only he and two others survived.

But, if such methods explained some of why they volunteered, it did not explain the fervor with which they rushed to their destruction. That can only be elucidated by the Iranian Revolution's peculiar brand of Islam.

AT THE BEGINNING of the war, Iran's ruling mullahs did not send human beings into the minefields, but rather animals: donkeys, horses, and dogs. But the tactic proved useless: "After a few

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donkeys had been blown up, the rest ran off in terror," Mostafa Arki reports in his book *Eight Years of War in the Middle East*. The donkeys reacted normally—fear of death is natural. The *Basiji*, on the other hand, marched fearlessly and without complaint to their deaths. The curious slogans that they chanted while entering the battlefields are of note: "Against the Yazid of our time!"; "Hussein's caravan is moving on!"; "A new Karbala awaits us!"

Yazid, Hussein, Karbala—these are all references to the founding myth of Shia Islam. In the late seventh century, Islam was split between those loyal to the Caliph Yazid—the predecessors of Sunni Islam—and the founders of Shia Islam, who thought that the Imam Hussein, grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, should govern the Muslims. In 680, Hussein led an uprising against the "illegitimate" caliph, but he was betrayed. On the plain of Karbala, on the tenth day of the month of Muharram, Yazid's forces attacked Hussein and his entourage and killed them. Hussein's corpse bore the marks of 33 lance punctures and 34 blows of the sword. His head was cut off and his body was trampled by horses.

Ever since, the martyrdom of Hussein has formed the core of Shia theology, and the Ashura Festival that commemorates his death is Shiism's holiest day. On that day, men beat themselves with their fists or flagellate themselves with iron chains to approximate Hussein's sufferings. At times throughout the centuries, the ritual has grown obscenely violent. In his study *Crowds and Power*, Elias Canetti recounts a firsthand report of the Ashura Festival as it occurred in mid-nineteenth-century Tehran:

> 500,000 people, in the grip of delirium, cover their heads with ashes and beat their foreheads against the ground. They want to subject themselves voluntarily to torments: to commit suicide en masse, to mutilate themselves with refinement. ... Hundreds of men in white shirts come by, their faces ecstatically raised toward the sky. Of these, several will be dead this evening, many will be maimed and mutilated, and the white shirts, dyed red, will be burial shrouds. ... There is no more beautiful destiny than to die on the Festival of Ashura. The gates of the eight Paradises are wide open for the holy and everyone tries to get through them.

Bloody excesses of this sort are prohibited in contemporary Iran, but, during the Iran-Iraq War, Khomeini appropriated the essence of the ritual as a symbolic act and politicized it. He took the inward-directed fervor and channeled it toward the external enemy. He transformed the passive lamentation into active protest. He made the Battle of Karbala the prototype of any fight against tyranny. Indeed, this technique had been used during political demonstrations in 1978, when many Iranian protestors wore funeral shrouds in order to tie the battle of 680 to the contemporary struggle against the shah. In the war against Iraq, the allusions to Karbala were given still greater significance: On the one hand, the scoundrel Yazid, now in the form of Saddam Hussein; on the other, the Prophet's grandson, Hussein, for whose suffering the time of Shia revenge had finally come.

The power of this story was further reinforced by a theological twist that Khomeini gave it. According to Khomeini, life is worthless and death is the beginning of genuine existence. "The natural world," he explained in October 1980, "is the lowest element, the scum of creation." What is decisive is the beyond: The "divine world, that is eternal." This latter world is accessible to martyrs. Their death is no death, but merely the transition from this world to the world beyond, where they will live on eternally and in splendor. Whether the warrior wins the battle or loses it and dies a martyr—in both cases, his victory is assured: either a mundane or a spiritual one.

This attitude had a fatal implication for the *Basiji*: Whether they survived or not was irrelevant. Not even the tactical utility of their sacrifice mattered. Military victories are secondary, Khomeini explained in September 1980. The *Basiji* must "understand that he is a 'soldier of God' for whom it is not so much the outcome of the conflict as the mere participation in it that provides fulfillment and gratification." Could Khomeini's antipathy for life have had as much effect in the war against Iraq without the Karbala myth? Probably not. With the word "Karbala" on their lips, the *Basiji* went elatedly into battle.

The Imam Hussein—draped over a Tehran building during an Ashura celebration—is the seventh-century martyr at the center of Shia theology.

GAMMA PRESSE/NEWSCOM

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FOR THOSE WHOSE courage still waned in the face of death, the regime put on a show. A mysterious horseman on a magnificent steed would suddenly appear on the front lines. His face—covered in phosphorous—would shine. His costume was that of a medieval prince. A child soldier, Reza Behrouzi, whose story was documented in 1985 by French writer Freidoune Sehabjam, reported that the soldiers reacted with a mixture of panic and rapture.

> Everyone wanted to run toward the horseman. But he drove them away. "Don't come to me!" he shouted, "Charge into battle against the infidels! ... Revenge the death of our Imam Hussein and strike down the progeny of Yazid!" As the figure disappears, the soldiers cry: "Oh, Imam Zaman, where are you?" They throw themselves on their knees, and pray and wail. When the figure appears again, they get to their feet as a single man. Those whose forces are not yet exhausted charge the enemy lines.

The mysterious apparition who was able to trigger such emotions is the "hidden imam," a mythical figure who influences the thought and action of Ahmadinejad to this day. The Shia call all the male descendants of the Prophet Muhammad "imams" and ascribe to them a quasidivine status. Hussein, who was killed at Karbala by Yazid, was the third Imam. His son and grandson were the fourth and fifth. At the end of this line, there is the "Twelfth Imam," who is named Muhammad. Some call him the *Mahdi* (the "divinely guided one"), though others say *imam Zaman* (from *sahib-e zaman:* "the ruler of time"). He was born in 869, the only son of the eleventh Imam. In 874, he disappeared without a trace, thereby bringing Muhammad's lineage to a close. In Shia mythology, however, the Twelfth Imam survived. The Shia believe that he merely withdrew from public view when he was five and that he will sooner or later emerge from his "occultation" in order to liberate the world from evil.

Writing in the early '80s, V.S. Naipaul showed how deeply rooted the belief in the coming of the Shia messiah is among the Iranian population. In *Among the Believers: An Islamic Journey*, he described seeing posters in post-Revolutionary Tehran bearing motifs similar to those of Maoist China: crowds, for instance, with rifles and machine guns raised in the air as if in greeting. The posters always bore the same phrase: TWELFTH IMAM, WE ARE WAITING FOR YOU. Naipaul writes that he could grasp intellectually the veneration for Khomeini. "But the idea of the revolution as something more, as an offering to the Twelfth Imam, the man who had vanished ... and remained 'in occultation,' was harder to seize." According to Shia tradition, legitimate Islamic rule can only be established following the reappearance of the Twelfth Imam. Until that time, the Shia have only to wait, to keep their peace with illegitimate rule, and to remember the Prophet's grandson, Hussein, in sorrow. Khomeini, however, had no intention of waiting. He vested the myth with an entirely new sense: The Twelfth Imam will only emerge when the believers have vanquished evil. To speed up the *Mahdi*'s return, Muslims had to shake off their torpor and fight.

This activism had more in common with the revolutionary ideas of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood than with Shia traditions. Khomeini had been familiar with the texts of the Muslim Brothers since the 1930s, and he agreed with the Brothers' conception of what had to be considered "evil": namely, all the achievements of modernity that replaced divine providence with individual self-determination, blind faith with doubt, and the stern morality of *sharia* with sensual pleasures. According to legend, Yazid was the embodiment of everything that was forbidden: He drank wine, enjoyed music and song, and played with dogs and monkeys. And was not Saddam just the same? In the war against Iraq, "evil" was clearly defined, and vanquishing evil was the precondition for hastening the return of the beloved Twelfth Imam. When he let himself be seen for a few minutes riding his white steed, the readiness to die a martyr's death increased considerably.

IT WAS THIS culture that nurtured Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's worldview. Born outside Tehran in 1956, the son of blacksmith, he trained as a civil engineer, and, during the Iran-Iraq War, he joined the Revolutionary Guards. His biography remains strangely elliptical. Did he play a role in the 1979 takeover of the U.S. Embassy, as some charge? What exactly did he do during the war? These are questions for which we have no definite answers. His presidential website says simply that he was "on active service as a *Basij* volunteer up to the end of the holy defense [the war against Iraq] and served as a combat engineer in different spheres of duty."

We do know that, after the war's end, he served as the governor of Ardebil Province and as an organizer of Ansar-e Hezbollah, a radical gang of violent Islamic vigilantes. After becoming mayor of Tehran in April 2003, Ahmadinejad used his position to build up a strong network of radical Islamic fundamentalists known as *Abadgaran-e Iran-e Islami*, or Developers of an Islamic Iran. It was in that role that he won his reputation—and popularity—as a hardliner devoted to rolling back the liberal reforms of then–President Muhammad Khatami. Ahmadinejad positioned himself as the leader of a "second revolution" to eradicate corruption and Western influences from Iranian society. And the *Basiji*, whose numbers had grown dramatically since the end of the Iran-Iraq War, embraced him. Recruited from the more conservative and impoverished parts of the population, the *Basiji* fall under the direction of—and swear absolute loyalty to—the Supreme Leader Ali Khameini, Khomeini's successor. During Ahmadinejad's run for the presidency in 2005, the millions of *Basiji*—in every Iranian town, neighborhood, and mosque—became his unofficial campaign workers.

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Fueling the Green Revolution

The transportation industry accounts for a quarter of our nation's energy usage, consuming 50 percent of imported oil stocks and 75 percent of domestic oil production.

In the face of it, the American driving public faces a huge problem: continued record demand for fuel even as finite fuel supplies are drawn down and prices rise.

But surprisingly, the very use of motor vehicles may point the way out of this dilemma. There may be a way to keep our cars and transportation industries on the road while striking a new ecological balance.

Americans are the largest consumers of fuel, on a per capita basis, in the world. The transportation industry accounts for a quarter of our nation's energy usage, consuming 50 percent of imported oil stocks and 75 percent of domestic oil production. As even President Bush described it the United States is "addicted to oil." Yet what most people don't realize is that technologies and solutions are emerging in the private and public sector, in the energy and transportation industries, that point the way out of our dilemma.

The State of Fuels Today

Alternative fuels already used in the transportation industry include gas-electric hybrid systems (Toyota's Prius model), ethanol (E85), biodiesel (petroleum combined with a natural material such as corn or soybean oil) and compressed natural gas (CNG). Less-used alternative fuels include liquefied natural gas (LNG), liquid propane gas (LPG), hydrogen and hythane.

Even though vehicles capable of using alternative fuels can already be seen on American streets, the lack of filling stations severely limits accessibility for the average consumer. But several popular late model General Motors Corp. and DaimlerChrysler vehicles already are equipped to use E85, and most diesel models can use biodiesel fuels.

A June 2005 Congressional Research Service report pointed out that without interested buyers, companies won't invest in growing the biofuel infrastructure, noting that without readily available pumps, "the vehicles will not become popular." In an attempt to overcome these obstacles, some states are providing a variety of perks to encourage corporate and consumer alternative fuel use.

Progress Report: The Public Sector

The notion that no one on Capitol Hill is paying attention to alternative fuel possibilities is not true. Three laws — the Alternative Motor Fuels Act of 1988, the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 and the Energy

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Policy Act (EPAct) of 1992 — as well as several executive orders demonstrate public sector support for developing alternative fuel technologies. According to the federal government, alternative transportation fuels include electricity, natural gas, propane (LPG), ethanol, methanol, biodiesel and hydrogen.

The Alternative Motor Fuels Act created an Interagency Commission on Alternative Motor Fuels. The U.S. Department of Energy is one of the most comprehensive information resources for alternative fuels, frequently reporting on the status of alternative fuel projects via its Alternative Fuels Data Center, found online at www.eere.energy.gov/afdc. Resources like an E85 Fleet Toolkit, which helps firms develop proprietary E85 stations, and a nationwide alternative-fuels station finder, are available on that Web site.

The energy policy act mandates that federal and state agency fleets purchase a percentage of vehicles capable of using non-petroleum-based fuels, also called "flex-fuel vehicles." Government agency fleets are the largest consumers of alternative fuels as a result of this requirement. A little-known clause in the energy policy act allows the DOE to require private and local government fleets to follow suit.

Ethanol alcohol is produced when starches are fermented and distilled. A variety of organic inputs can be used, including corn, barley, wheat, sugarcane, sugar beets, potatoes, sunflower seeds, trees and grasses.

That said, many municipalities have taken the initiative and moved that way on their own. For example, metropolitan buses in Baltimore already run on green fuels. Also, since 1990, Clean Air Act Amendments require government agencies in cities with poor air quality to use clean-fuel vehicles with reduced emissions.

Three executive orders issued during the Clinton administration also promote alternative fuel proliferation. Executive Order 12844, issued in 1992, urges federal agencies to exceed the act's requirements, while Executive Order 13031, issued four years later, requires federal agencies to meet the energy policy act's requirements regardless of budget constraints and to provide yearly progress reports on the act's mandates. In addition, Executive Order 13149, issued in 2000, stipulates a reduction of government consumption of petroleum-based fuels and identifies alternative-fuel vehicles as a means for accomplishing this goal.

The cost of alternative fuels that can be used in current car, truck, van and SUV models, and the limited nationwide availability of filling stations represent the host of issues that need to be addressed before every vehicle can run on electric or biodiesel. Furthermore, performance considerations such as maximum speed, acceleration time, and time needed to warm the engine in colder climates may limit the popular appeal of these vehicles.

Fortunately, state governments have stepped in to provide incentives to those who either purchase alternative-fuel vehicles or produce alternative fuels. Commuters with hybrid vehicles in Virginia enjoy privileged use of HOV lanes, while the Maryland Soybean Board reimburses residents for half the cost of soy-based biodiesel purchased for one fiscal year, for a maximum rebate of $1,000. In Oklahoma, business owners can take advantage of a private loan program to convert fleets to alternative-fuel vehicles.

Repayment of principal borrowed at a 3 percent interest rate can be made from fuel savings during the three-year life of the loan. Maine established a Sustainable Energy Trust Fund to provide loans supporting sustainable energy projects, including demonstrations that either promote or support green transportation fuels. In Hawaii, fuel blends with a minimum of 10 percent alcohol (such as E85), as well as "100 percent" fuels (pure biodiesel or B100), are exempt from a 4 percent state sales tax.

In addition, a bill signed into law last summer requires an 80 percent increase in renewable fuels over the next six years. The government also is encouraging private enterprises to bear the burden of green-fuel reform, providing gas stations with a maximum $30,000 credit for offering E85 and other alternative fuel choices at the pumps.

Progress Report: The Private Sector

Independent of state and federal regulations, the private sector is sitting up and taking notice of the profits to be gained from the provision of fuel for federal and regional government fleets. And the private sector, too, is noticing the changing landscape of consumer preferences that is increasingly shifting toward green options such as organic foods and bio-friendly cleaning products. Startups that deal specifically in

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green fuels are incorporating across the country.

More than 30 ethanol and 50 biodiesel plants currently are in planning or construction stages. Ford Motor Co. plans to increase offerings of E85 vehicles to 250,000 in 2006, while GM is planning to produce more than 400,000 alternative-fueled vehicles. In fact, 2007 truly is becoming a banner year for E85 models: GM is putting E85 V6 engines in Chevrolet Impalas and Monte Carlos, Nissan has installed E85 engines in some trucks, and Chrysler, Dodge and Ford are quickly following in their footsteps. For example, if you're a station owner who wants to offer E85, Ford may pay you up to $5,000 in costs to convert to using the alternative fuel, a recent USA Today article noted.

Which Fuels Show the Most Promise?

Although there is plenty of debate on which alternative fuel type holds the most promise, biodiesel is the most well known in the consumer world, while CNG- or E85-powered vehicles are by and large the federal and state agency choices. In addition to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving mileage rates, ethanol blends and biodiesel fuels can be manufactured for domestic use stateside, which is a huge advantage. Another strong option is gas-electric hybrid cars.

Ethanol blends, like E85 (85 percent ethanol and 15 percent gas), show promise because they use a larger volume of organic inputs than common biodiesel blends. Ethanol alcohol is produced when starches are fermented and distilled. A variety of organic inputs can be used, including corn, barley, wheat, sugarcane, sugar beets, potatoes, sunflower seeds, trees and grasses. While producers in Brazil and Colombia tend to use sugarcane in ethanol production, the United States manufactures E85 using corn. A University of California-Berkeley study found that ethanol yields more than 25 percent more energy output than it requires in energy input. E85 fuels also can be used in many of the estimated 5 million flexible fuel vehicles now in use.

Problems with touting E85 as the green fuel superstar emerge because the 85 percent ethanol-based fuel is competing against the growing use of ethanol to oxygenate gasoline. Oil companies formerly used methyl tertiary butyl ether (MTBE) for this purpose, but have switched to ethanol due to health hazards resulting from the MTBE additive. The widespread use of ethanol as an oxygenator has created a domestic shortage, with U.S. oil companies now importing the chemical from Brazil.

CNN recently reported that the ethanol shortage could cause fuel supply problems in Texas and the Northeast this summer. For two consecutive years, the U.S. ethanol production industry has doubled in size to reach its current capacity of 4 billion gallons processed at 95 plants. Last year, the United States used 140 billion gallons of ethanol, requiring 136 billion gallons in imports. Construction of U.S. ethanol production facilities will eventually be able to meet demand for a nationwide switch, but until such plants are operational, the potential of E85 is limited.

Biodiesel — either in pure form or blended with petroleum to create a biodiesel blend — with varying concentrations of biomaterial looks like the current best bet for future consumption. Ethanol blends still demonstrate complications arising from combustion and emission of volatile organic compounds that present longer-term processing challenges. The National Biodiesel Board, a Missouri trade group, says the industry's capacity more than tripled in 2005 as it produced more than 75 million gallons of biodiesel. In 2004, only 25 million gallons of biodiesel were produced domestically in 53 plants. Biodiesel is available at more than 450 retail pumps, but may still be hard to find in many areas.

In addition, pure biodiesel (B100) is biodegradable, nontoxic and smells more like a food product than conventional gas. A popular biodiesel blend formulation, B20 (20 percent biodiesel combined with 80 percent petroleum diesel), provides environmental benefits without a large cost increase, according to the National Biodiesel Board. Biodiesel also is the only alternative fuel that has undergone testing for health effects required by the Clean Air

> The bridge between bio-based alternative fuels and future technology is embodied in current electric-gas car models... Gas-electric hybrids pollute less and go further on a gallon without increased fuel prices.

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Act, emitting fewer chemicals that qualify as potential carcinogens. A DOE study has proven that choosing B100 biodiesel over conventional diesel reduces carbon dioxide emissions by 78.5 percent. B100 also emits 47 percent less asthma-inducing particulate matter and 50 percent less smog-causing hydrocarbon exhaust emissions than do conventional diesels, while also reducing carbon monoxide output by 48 percent.

And biodiesel already has fans, including the U.S. Navy, which is the largest consumer of diesel and uses B20 biodiesel in non-tactical vehicles. Fort Lauderdale Water Taxi chose to use biodiesel for its marine fleet due to its biodegradability and the fact that biodiesel blended with traditional diesel can increase fuel lubricity by 65 percent or more. Last year, country musician Willie Nelson developed his own brand of B20 blend biodiesel targeted for use in the trucking industry. In addition, B100 meets stringent clean diesel standards established by the California Air Resources Board. Other countries are getting in on the green fuels act as well. The United Kingdom has established a 2010 deadline for alternative energy reform, requiring 5 percent of all fuel sold to come from a renewable source.

Another future advantage of bio-based (ethanol and biodiesel) alternative fuel proliferation is a return to regional farming specification. While states in the Northeast may offer incentives to farmers using soybeans to produce biodiesel, states in the Midwest provide credits to companies using corn in E85 manufacturing. Further, Kansas farmers who sell to producers qualified by the Kansas Qualified Agricultural Ethyl Alcohol Producer Fund may receive up to 75 cents per gallon sold to an alcohol blender, while ethanol and biodiesel producers are entitled to apply to the Maryland Renewable Fuels Incentive Board in that state. Board-certified manufacturers are eligible for credits ranging from 5 cents to 20 cents per gallon, provided they produce E85 from small grains or biodiesel from soybean oil processed in a facility operating after Dec. 31, 2004.

> Beyond providing a challenge to entrepreneurs, alternative fuels currently are providing social, environmental, and fiscal benefits.

Another interesting benefit of biodiesel production is a byproduct of the manufacturing process itself. Processing biodiesel produces glycerol, used in a variety of cosmetic and household products, such as hand soap. The U.K.-based firm Biofuels plans to sell glycerol produced during its manufacture of rapeseed oil-based biodiesel to pharmaceutical companies.

The bridge between bio-based alternative fuels and future technology is embodied in current electric-gas car models such as the Prius, Honda's Civic Hybrid and Insight, the Chevrolet Silverado Hybrid, the Ford Escape Hybrid, the GMC Sierra Hybrid, and other models. Gas-electric hybrids pollute less and go further on a gallon without increased fuel prices. The one major downside of the hybrid model, however, is that drivers can take only a brief 50- to 100-mile trip before recharging the car. Commuters who travel more than 100 miles to work each way would most likely have to rule out current hybrids as a viable choice. Plus, hybrids tend to have a small profile and take a long time to recharge.

Hydrogen-based alternative energy cells, while encouraging, need significant research before their potential can be realized. Taking the longer-term view, hydrogen-cell technology provides the inspiring possibility of pure output. Fuel cells produce electricity using hydrogen and oxygen, providing emission-free energy. In fact, the only byproduct of a hydrogen fuel cell is water vapor. Toyota, Nissan, Honda, Ford and DaimlerChrysler are researching this hydrogen fuel-cell technology, so it deserves mention as a likely contender over the next several decades.

Natural gas fuels have another advantage over biodiesels: Any carbon-based fuel that undergoes combustion produces carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas. Natural gas-based fuels produce less carbon dioxide than fuels with either petroleum or coal constituencies like biodiesel blends, such as B20.

In addition, the potential for small, independent, local processing companies and regional chains of green filling stations could provide another economic boost. One such regional startup venture is United Biofuels Inc. in York, Pa., which will use soybeans from surrounding Manchester Township to manufacture biodiesel in a Manchester plant, which currently is under construction. In North Carolina, NewGen Technologies Inc. finalized the purchase of a Crown Central Petroleum Corp. fuel tank farm last month, which it will incorporate into a regional alternative-fuels production and storage network to supply biodiesel and ethanol blends.

Make an Effort to Use Green Fuel

Even beyond Earth Day this month, there still is time to pull the owner's manual out of your car's glove compartment. Check to see if your car will process alternative fuels, or call your auto manufacturer to see if your car, truck or SUV can process E85. If you have a diesel model, make an effort to fuel up once or twice with green fuel.

As with other progressive changes in consumer behavior, drivers behind the growth of the green fuel industry will be individual buyers and select government fleets, at least for now. Until even bigger change occurs in government policy, consumers will dictate what they buy at the pump.

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SINCE AHMADINEJAD BECAME president, the influence of the *Basiji* has grown. In November, the new Iranian president opened the annual "*Basiji* Week," which commemorates the martyrs of the Iran-Iraq War. According to a report in *Kayan*, a publication loyal to Khameini, some nine million *Basiji*—12 percent of the Iranian population—turned out to demonstrate in favor of Ahmadinejad's anti-liberal platform. The article claimed that the demonstrators "form[ed] a human chain some 8,700 kilometers long. ... In Tehran alone, some 1,250,000 people turned out." Barely noticed by the Western media, this mobilization attests to Ahmadinejad's determination to impose his "second revolution" and to extinguish the few sparks of freedom in Iran.

At the end of July 2005, the *Basij* movement announced plans to increase its membership from ten million to 15 million by 2010. The elite special units are supposed to comprise some 150,000 people by then. Accordingly, the *Basiji* have received new powers in their function as an unofficial division of the police. What this means in practice became clear in February 2006, when the *Basiji* attacked the leader of the bus-drivers' union, Massoud Osanlou. They held Osanlou prisoner in his apartment, and they cut off the tip of his tongue in order to convince him to keep quiet. No *Basiji* needs to fear prosecution for such terrorists tactics before a court of law.

As *Basij* ideology and influence enjoy a renaissance under Ahmadinejad, the movement's belief in the virtues of violent self-sacrifice remains intact. There is no "truth commission" in Iran to investigate the state-planned collective suicide that took place from 1980 to 1988. Instead, every Iranian is taught the virtues of martyrdom from childhood. Obviously, many of them reject the *Basij* teachings. Still, everyone knows the name of Hossein Fahmideh, who, as a 13-year-old boy during the war, blew himself up in front of an Iraqi tank. His image follows Iranians throughout their day: whether on postage stamps or the currency. If you hold up a 500 Rial bill to the light, it is his face you will see in the watermark. The self-destruction of Fahmideh is depicted as a model of profound faith by the Iranian press. It has been the subject of both an animated film and an episode of the TV series "Children of Paradise." As a symbol of their readiness to die for the Revolution, *Basij* groups wear white funeral shrouds over their uniforms during public appearances.

During this year's Ashura Festival, school classes were taken on excursions to a "Martyrs' Cemetery." "They wear headbands painted with the name Hussein," *The New York Times* reported, "and march beneath banners that read: 'Remembering the Martyrs today is as important as becoming a Martyr' and 'The Nation for whom Martyrdom means happiness, will always be Victorious.' " Since 2004, the mobilization of Iranians for suicide brigades has intensified, with recruits being trained for foreign missions. Thus, a special military unit has been created bearing the name "Commando of Voluntary Martyrs." According to its own statistics, this force has so far recruited some 52,000 Iranians to the suicidal cause. It aims to form a "martyrdom unit" in every Iranian province.

THE *BASIJI*'S CULT of self-destruction would be chilling in any country. In the context of the Iranian nuclear program, however, its obsession with martyrdom amounts to a lit fuse. Nowadays, *Basiji* are sent not into the desert, but rather into the laboratory. *Basij* students are encouraged to enroll in technical and scientific disciplines. According to a spokesperson for the Revolutionary Guard, the aim is to use the "technical factor" in order to augment "national security."

What exactly does that mean? Consider that, in December 2001, former Iranian President Hashemi Rafsanjani explained that "the use of even one nuclear bomb inside Israel will destroy everything." On the other hand, if Israel responded with its own nuclear weapons, it "will only harm the Islamic world. It is not irrational to contemplate such an eventuality." Rafsanjani thus spelled out a macabre cost-benefit analysis. It might not be possible to destroy Israel without suffering retaliation. But, for Islam, the level of damage Israel could inflict is bearable—only 100,000 or so additional martyrs for Islam.

And Rafsanjani is a member of the moderate, pragmatic wing of the Iranian Revolution; he believes that any conflict ought to have a "worthwhile" outcome. Ahmadinejad, by contrast, is predisposed toward apocalyptic thinking. In one of his first TV interviews after being elected president, he enthused: "Is there an art that is more beautiful, more divine, more eternal than the art of the martyr's death?" In September 2005, he concluded his first speech before the United Nations by imploring God to bring about the return of the Twelfth Imam. He finances a research institute in Tehran whose sole purpose is to study, and, if possible, accelerate the coming of the imam. And, at a theology conference in November 2005, he stressed, "The most important task of our Revolution is to prepare the way for the return of the Twelfth Imam."

A politics pursued in alliance with a supernatural force is necessarily unpredictable. Why should an Iranian president engage in pragmatic politics when his assumption is that, in three or four years, the savior will appear? If the messiah is coming, why compromise? That is why, up to now, Ahmadinejad has pursued confrontational policies with evident pleasure.

The history of the *Basiji* shows that we must expect monstrosities from the current Iranian regime. Already, what began in the early '80s with the clearing of minefields by human detonators has spread throughout the Middle East, as suicide bombing has become the terrorist tactic of choice. The motivational shows in the desert—with hired actors in the role of the hidden imam—have evolved into a showdown between a zealous Iranian president and the Western world. And the *Basiji* who once upon a time wandered the desert armed only with a walking stick is today working as a chemist in a uranium enrichment facility. ■

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Raising Questions

THE FRENCH DIRECTOR JEAN-Pierre Melville, who died in 1973, has become an almost private idol to some cineastes; but unlike many such idols, he deserves more renown. A step toward wider Melville knowledge is now at hand.

He began making films in 1945, right after his military service; suffused with admiration for American films, he set out to use American genres in his own way. (Even his name was an American adoption. His original surname was Grumbach, but he changed it—daringly, we might say—after he read *Moby-Dick*.) A prime instance of his Gallicized use of Hollywood is *Le Samouraï* (1967), unforgettable, in which Alain Delon plays a contract killer—a familiar film figure, but this one is swathed in existential mystique.

ARMY OF SHADOWS
(Rialto)

IRON ISLAND
(Kino)

A story about Delon, possibly true, applies to the film reviewed below. In 1967 Melville was reading his screenplay of *Le Samouraï* to Delon to see if the actor would accept the leading role. After Melville had read five or six pages, through which the protagonist moves silently, Delon said, "I'll do it." "But," said Melville, "you haven't even had one line of dialogue yet." Delon said, "That's why I'll do it."

This taciturnity is very marked in **ARMY OF SHADOWS**, Melville's film of 1969, which is now having its sorrily belated American premiere. The total amount of dialogue in the script makes it a contender for the "Least Talk in a Sound Film" prize. What is cannily winning is that, as we begin to realize how little is being said, we also realize that this procedure is exactly right for this picture.

Based on a novel by Joseph Kessel, Melville's screenplay is about the French Resistance during World War II, a subject with which, in the course of his military service, he had personal experience—as did Kessel. The very first shot puts facts before us with clenched-jaw reticence. It is a long shot of the Arc de Triomphe. A column of soldiers in the distance moves from the left toward the Arc. There they wheel and come down the Champs Élysées toward us. As they approach, we see that they are German. A sad history has been synopsized for us in our assumption that they were French and in our discovery otherwise.

It is 1942. The story, which need not be sketched here, is taut, evoking a special fright that is tinged with gratitude—about matters that we know will eventually turn out well for the cause, if not for the individuals. The film centers on a group of Resistance fighters in civilian clothes who are seemingly carrying on civilian lives. The head of the group is played by Lino Ventura, an actor little known here despite a four-decade career that ended in 1987, during which he reminded many of Jean Gabin, not in looks but in quiet power. His colleagues are played by, among others, Simone Signoret, an attractive stalwart of French film, and Jean-Pierre Cassel, who was charming in his early balletic roles but who has a terrible non-dancing role here. Serge Reggiani, who played Signoret's lover in the musky *Casque d'Or*, appears briefly as a barber whose part in the Resistance is to shave Ventura without reporting him. Reggiani's acceptance of this tiny role is, I assume, a bow to the subject and to Melville.

One particular bit of luck for this reissue is the fact that Melville's cinematographer, Pierre Lhomme, was on hand to help with the restoration of this thirty-five-year-old film. The result is a paradoxical beauty. Very many of the scenes are in sunlight—Melville avoided such facile stuff as shadows for suspense—yet they are chilly. The seasons vary, but the general effect is of a bright winter day that is freezing.

A salute to the distributors, Rialto Pictures. This company specializes in reissuing films of the past, American and foreign, that deserve to be seen again—or, as in this case, for the first time—in good form. The Rialto list is admirable, and *Army of Shadows* ranks high on it.

To see a film about the Resistance these days is a peculiar experience. Who could want such conditions back again? But if in some pernicious way that should happen, would there be people—ordinary people who had been living quite ordinary lives—who would behave as these people do? May the question remain theoretical: still, it nags.

During Franco's regime in Spain, we got a few Spanish films that were surprising, not in their politics but in their unblinkered view of experience. Similarly, in the last fifteen years or so, we have been getting films from Iran that are free-spirited, humane, and sometimes exceptionally subtle. Many of us have wondered how a society that is not liberal and open could produce such films. And Iran's recent growlings under its new president make such a film as **IRON ISLAND** all the more remarkable.

This second feature by the writer-director Mohammad Rasoulof is about the virtues of community and communal spirit, as many other Iranian films have been. We are meant to see how people live together, care for one another, share interests. But *Iron Island* brings that familiar Iranian message uniquely. Most of the people in the picture are Arabs, a small minority in Iran, who are tolerated, so far as we are shown, without prejudice.

Possibly the tolerance is easy because all of these Arabs are isolated, living on an abandoned old tanker anchored offshore in the Persian Gulf. Possibly, too, Iranian embrace of some sort is awaiting them, because the old ship is very slowly sinking, and the owner-captain sells it at the end to buy land for the ship's resi-

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dents. But no hint of social cloud is visible at the finish: the metaphor is just slowly working itself out. The group's isolation is over: the small community must join the larger one. It all happens with no suggestion of threat, simply as fate making itself manifest.

During most of the film onboard the ship, the owner-captain is loving and stern, a (generally unshaven) god who dispenses affection, concern, and justice. There are misbehaviors on board, at least in the captain's view, usually committed by a youngish man. The culprit has to be punished for his misdeed, and no one protests the punishment: the community agrees with its chief's view of right and wrong.

Well-photographed and adequately directed and acted, *Iron Island* is (painless) propaganda, informing us about domestic peace and goodwill. And this film, too, leaves us with a question: why does the currently aggressive Iran want the world, especially our chunk of it, to see what it is "really" like? ■

JENNIFER HOMANS ON DANCE
The Skin Trade

MODERN DANCERS TODAY do not dance. They pontificate, shout, swear, strut, and take off their clothes. Not all modern dancers, of course: choreographers such as Paul Taylor and Mark Morris continue to draw from an impressive range of dance techniques and styles, including those they invented themselves. But descend one or two rungs down the artistic food chain, and you will find a startling number of choreographers working in small venues who are cynical, contemptuous, and physically inarticulate.

MICHAEL
(Dance Theater Workshop)

THE SLEEPING BEAUTY NOTEBOOK
(Dance Theater Workshop)

BIRD BRAIN: "FLIGHT OF MIND"
(Dance Theater Workshop)

16 [R]EVOLUTIONS
(Eyebeam Art and Technology Center)

Consider Ann Liv Young and her recent show, **MICHAEL**, at New York's Dance Theater Workshop. Young, who is twenty-four, studied dance and choreography at the North Carolina School of the Arts and Hollins University. She has won choreography scholarships to the Laban Center in London and the American Dance Festival in Durham, North Carolina. The invitation to perform at Dance Theater Workshop, one of several prestigious venues in downtown Manhattan, is another badge of recognition. So Young has earned the respect of at least some of her peers, and we may assume that she has encountered fundamental dance techniques. But to judge from her work, she has willfully abandoned them all.

And for what? Ersatz sex. Her show opens with a girl in underwear curled up on a coffee table in a living room. The girl gradually rouses herself and begins a rather crude sex-club dance. A man peeks through the window, his pants down, and masturbates. Girlfriends appear in various states of undress, and they do "fucking dances" while they talk about their "fucking lives" and "fucking boyfriends." They mock-fuck the furniture, one another, the man. They tie his penis to the couch with ribbons ("we are hot, we are heavy, we are into each other"). One strips completely and dances on the table while the man sticks his fingers in her vagina. (I am not making this up.)

That's about it. Except that toward the end of the performance I attended, one of the women made an entrance through the masturbating man's window and cut herself badly on the glass. With blood streaming down her legs, she proceeded to do yet another sex-club dance. Finally, Ann Liv Young rose from the first row of the audience (less than three feet away) and escorted her dancer offstage. Why did she wait so long to assist her injured colleague? Perhaps she liked the look of this bloody bump-and-grind?

Young would not be worth writing about (much less experiencing) except that her work has won praise, most notably from *The New York Times*. In a favorable online review, the *Times* critic Roslyn Sulcas praised Young for showing "real bodies ... in their uninhibited, unairbrushed imperfection" and lauded "her vivid, rigorous theatrical imagination." Later the *Times* produced a full-page article by another critic, Gia Kourlas, titled "The Bare Essentials of Dance," in which Young was singled out with several other artists who are purportedly using nudity to "reveal something essential about human experience." Indeed, according to the *Times*, Young is part of a new artistic movement: this is not the boring old nudity of the 1960s or the 1980s, but a fresh and "deepening investigation of the body" whose "effects on dance as an art form may be felt for years."

Nudity, Kourlas's article goes on to report, is "empowering," and artists are "cutting away layers to get to the skin." As for Young's own artistic preoccupations: these, we learn, may be rooted in her difficult adolescence. That is, she wore a size 4 and a 34DD. The trauma of her physical proportions was apparently so great that she had breast reduction surgery. Now Young says that "being naked represents a kind of authenticity. I'm interested in that honesty." The *Times* is right: even at their self-indulgent worst, the 1960s could never compete with this level of mindless solipsism, in dance and criticism alike.

Ann Liv Young is not alone in her propensity to substitute fake sex for real dance. Nor, alas, is she unique in her lack of a coherent physical grammar. Consider Donald Byrd, whose evening-length **THE SLEEPING BEAUTY NOTEBOOK** was also recently presented at Dance Theater Workshop. Byrd is an established choreographer with a substantial resumé who has created dances for (among others) the Alvin Ailey Company and the Pacific Northwest Ballet. He is currently the director of Spectrum Dance Theater based in Seattle, which performed his work.

The Sleeping Beauty Notebook is a postmodern gloss on Tchaikovsky and Petipa's well-known nineteenth-century classic. It challenges what might be called the ballet's "master narrative" by breaking the story into fragmented episodes spliced with irreverent com-

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mentary. Byrd's idea, hardly original, is to subvert and thus to update the ballet's classical and fairy-tale forms. Unfortunately, Byrd seems to think that he can best achieve this by turning the ballet through the lens of (surprise, surprise) sex and trashy talk. And so, in the opening scene, the wicked fairy Carabosse—angry that she was not invited to the princess's christening—enters in a rage, shouting at the top of her lungs: "You motherfuckers, you motherfuckers!"

It is downhill from there. Steps from the original ballet are transposed into thrusting and other sexually obvious moves, and the dancers cuss, fart, and sneer ("Snow White was a slut"). The prince is horny, the princess stupidly balletic, and Carabosse turns out to be a vicious sicko, stabbing a voodoo doll of the princess with perverted pleasure. As if to underscore the meretricious character of the whole exercise, Byrd himself appears on stage about halfway through the performance and addresses the audience directly. Opening a discussion of the ballet and its themes, he poses the question: is Carabosse like a terrorist?

Byrd admits that he feels sorry for Carabosse, whose predicament in the ballet reminds him of an article he read about Palestinians feeling compassion for Israelis as they withdrew from the settlements. The conversation stalls as the audience tries to engage the subject, one woman suggesting that "to her" Carabosse is more like the socially marginalized French Muslims. The dancers resume and the show goes on, relentlessly loud and interminably boring. And *The New York Times* gave *The Sleeping Beauty Notebook* its stamp of approval, hailing it as "fascinating, erratic and ultimately deeply moving.... in totality, a triumph."

Byrd is not the only choreographer whose tendentious political thinking confuses and confounds his art. In another key, we have Jennifer Monson, whose **BIRD BRAIN: "FLIGHT OF MIND"** was also presented at Dance Theater Workshop. Monson graduated from Sarah Lawrence College in 1983 and has been dancing and choreographing ever since. Her work has won the support of the Guggenheim Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the New York Foundation for the Arts, and has been performed across the United States and in Australia, Europe, Latin America, and Africa. According to my program notes, *BIRD BRAIN* is part of "a navigational dance project that included the theatrical piece *The Pigeon Project* and three migratory tours that followed *Gray Whales* (Mexico to Canada), *Ospreys* (Maine, through Cuba to Venezuela) and *Ducks and Geese* (Texas to Minnesota)." "*Flight of Mind*," the notes explain, "is a distillation of this project for a theatrical context." Monson recently founded iLand, or Interdisciplinary Laboratory for Art, Nature, and Dance, "to support creative research for sustainable systems in art and the environment."

This is well intentioned enough, if a bit lacking in focus. From the performance, however, it is obscure to me how dances as dull as this could ever hope to raise awareness of environmental issues—if indeed that is Monson's goal. The performance begins with a "building migration" on the outdoor terrace of Dance Theater Workshop, with audience members filing through and pausing to watch a bunch of well-meaning children performing nondescript movement. Then we "migrate" outdoors onto the sidewalk for grown-ups doing the same sort of thing—rolling around and bouncing up and down. Then we enter the theater, threading our way through potted reeds and bamboos.

Once the audience is seated, the dancers (four of them) begin. But they never dance: they walk, crawl, paw at the ground, put clothes on and take clothes off. A solo woman makes bird-like noises, eeking and burbling as she somersaults, whooshes, follows the flow of her own floppy movements. She is wearing a t-shirt and loose-fitting pants, no bra, messy hair, "natural-like." At one point, the dancers perform a long sequence with strips of plywood, lying on their backs and propping the wood up on their feet and flipping it over.

Monson's work is utterly incoherent. The music does not help. Composed by the "sound designer" David Kean, it is a twanging, creaking electronic soundscape, as cold and unintelligible as the dancing. Monson's movement has no discernible grammar, and her dancers appear untrained. Perhaps this is meant to make the dance more "accessible" to regular folks. But it doesn't. Audiences can take quite a lot of formal complexity, as long as the dance is legible and the dancers technically adept. But just as the environment cannot be sustained by rhetoric alone, neither can dance. Edifying program notes are no substitute for competent choreography.

Nor is technology. There is much fancy talk these days about computers as a new frontier in dance. One enthusiast for this cyber-art is Troika Ranch, a "digital dance theater," which recently performed **16 [R]EVOLUTIONS** at the Eyebeam Arts and Technology Center in Chelsea. The piece is a collaboration between choreographer, dancer, and media artist Dawn Stoppiello and composer and media artist Mark Coniglio. Coniglio has expertise in interactive music software and was recently awarded two "digital fellowships" from Dance Theater Workshop to continue his work. His primary interest is in the "real-time manipulation of digital video." What this means (I think) is that a video camera connected to a computer and pointed at the stage projects 3-D images of a dancer onto a backdrop as she performs.

The software allows the dancer to manipulate her own image as she moves. Sometimes the audience sees a live picture of the dancer; sometimes the dancer's movement is painted in wide brushstrokes across the backdrop in a variety of colors. The concept is seductive: the dancers are "hooked into" the technology, which responds to their rhythmic and kinetic impulses. And the ribbons of color are, well, pretty. But the overall effect is familiar to the point of banality—rather like watching the security screen at your local grocery store.

More interesting is the clever use of old-fashioned lighting. At one point, a shaft of intense white light is beamed onto a lone dancer on a darkened stage. The way the light falls makes it appear to offer an opening through the blackness. The dancer "pushes" the light, opening and closing it around him. But this intriguing visual image is never developed into a dance and quickly becomes tiresome. As the woman sitting next to me put it, "Cool effects with light and video."

Then there is Stoppiello's choreography. Or rather, the lack of it. Her movement vocabulary is severely limited and unoriginal: generic hops, swooshes, bends, and a lot of watered-down ballet. The electronic "soundscape" was "built from numerous sound samples gathered from the Internet" and is predictably confused. As if to compensate for the aesthetic poverty of the piece, there are highbrow gimmicks: pretentious pro-

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gram notes once again, this time telling us that the dance is about the evolution of mankind into "post-intellectual humans who have lost touch with the animal drives of their pre-human ancestors"; and the ubiquitous high heels and chairs typical of German *Tanztheater*; and (naturally) ample doses of nudity. None of this adds up to a dance.

The sterile anti-dances I have just described are often rewarded. John Rockwell, the senior dance critic for *The New York Times*, would have us believe that modern dance is experiencing a "renaissance of creative excitement." He credits Dance Theater Workshop in particular as an "increasingly reliable brand name for what is new and exciting in dance today." And he applauds "the influx of new and innovative artists" at DTW, which he attributes to the fine curatorial taste of Cathy Edwards, its artistic director. There is a dispiritingly familiar merry-go-round effect at work here: a talentless choreographer gets reviews, which impresses funders, which impresses producers, which gets him or her a show, which gets reviews....

Why is no one blowing the whistle? In part, there is an insidious but widespread feeling among those who care about the future of dance that we must support these artists, because they are all that we've got. For dance to thrive (the thinking goes), the public must be encouraged to attend even if the work is bad. But this is deeply insulting to artists. Moreover, it is a wholesale abandonment of aesthetic standards and critical responsibility.

And there is, I suspect, something else at work: in the race to keep up with a phantom youth generation, critics, funders, and producers shudder at the thought of being perceived to be politically incorrect, prudish, or behind the times. Desperate to please their IM-ing, iPod-addicted readers and audiences, they will do anything to position themselves on the "cutting edge." Confronted with a crass or shallow dance, aesthetic values are set aside in the interest of being "open-minded" and "tolerant" of "diverse" tastes and sensibilities. With this sleight-of-mind, one man's tawdry fiasco becomes the next man's masterpiece.

The consequences of this kind of thinking are well known. Standards are stretched to include even the most debased art, and politics (however "soft") substitute for discriminating thought. Taste becomes a matter of mere opinion, and art is held hostage to influence. Critics become pundits, hitching their own careers to trendy but undeserving artists with empty claims that what they see is "good to these eyes."

As for me, all I see are modestly talented young bodies in desperate need of training, and a choreographer, and something to wear. These artists and their supporters may think that they are breaking new ground, but I am reminded of a much older story, the one about the emperor who had no clothes. ■

Richard Primus
In the Beginnings

AMERICA'S CONSTITUTION: A BIOGRAPHY
By Akhil Reed Amar
(Random House, 657 pp., $29.95)

I.

AMERICAN CONSTITUTIONAL law has never come fully to grips with the Civil War. A constitution is a system of government, and no system of government fulfills its basic purposes if it cannot settle divisive political issues by non-violent means. In other words, a civil war is a constitutional failure. In the American case, it may be said that the Civil War of 1861–1865 marked the catastrophic failure of the Constitution of 1787.

Given the enormity of the collapse, it is remarkable that American civic culture has not internalized any real sense that the Constitution failed. One reason, of course, is that the victorious North did not tear up the written Constitution and start completely afresh. But there are also deeper reasons why Americans have been reluctant to see the Civil War and Reconstruction as regime-changing events. Long after Appomattox, the issues of the Civil War remained explosive in American politics. The status of African Americans was still a fighting matter one hundred years later, and even today national political cleavages track the geography of the old sectional division. Many Americans romanticized the Confederacy right through the twentieth century, suggesting that they could not wholeheartedly endorse the results of the Civil War. To ground the modern constitutional order in the Civil War and Reconstruction, therefore, would be to build the republic on a foundation about which many powerful people were at best ambivalent.

To regard the Founding as the one true source of our Constitution, by contrast, offers a great deal of comfort. If we are the direct successors to 1787, it must be the case that nothing earth-shattering has intervened. Celebrating the Founding allows us to repress the memory of slavery, of early America's failure to deal humanely and peacefully with that problem, and of the mass bloodletting that followed. The desire to erase that awful memory has been prominent for more than a century, ever since waving the bloody shirt ceased to be an effective electoral strategy for Northern Republicans. Woodrow Wilson, the first Southerner elected president after the Civil War, spoke on the fiftieth anniversary of Gettysburg of "the quarrel forgotten." And when the world war that followed Wilson's expression of relief spawned a tendency among historians to see mass warfare as the pointless tragedy of a blundering generation, the idea that the Civil War could have been a heroically generative event became less attractive still.

In the middle of the twentieth century, however, academic attitudes toward Reconstruction began to change. Huge black migrations from Southern farms to Northern cities altered the balance of power in national politics and made racial inequality an issue that neither major party could quite ignore. The confrontation with Nazism and the diplomatic and military imperatives of the early Cold War helped to incline more white Americans to think of the Civil

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War as an authentic crusade against slavery. Much of the historiography that had depicted Reconstruction as a foolish debacle was slowly discredited, in part because of its undertones (or overtones) of racism. In the 1970s and 1980s, historians such as Eric Foner emphasized the revolutionary nature of Reconstruction, depicting the era as a moment when Americans dared to make tremendous advances for justice. This new approach to history was not lost on constitutional lawyers. By the early 1990s, Bruce Ackerman presented Reconstruction as a second founding, a revolution in government comparable to that of the 1780s. Others have followed.

The idea of Reconstruction as a second American revolution is not yet orthodox in constitutional law. Judges still look to the eighteenth-century Founders for authoritative understandings of the Constitution, as if the changes that have occurred since are less than fundamental. In the broader civic culture, very few people think of John Bingham, Charles Sumner, and Thaddeus Stevens as constitutional founders on the order of Madison and Hamilton. But among academic experts in history and constitutional law, there is a growing current of scholars who recognize Reconstruction as an enormous shift.

II.

NOBODY BELIEVES IN RECONstruction as the pivotal event in American constitutional history more than Akhil Reed Amar. In many articles and books, he has argued that the post–Civil War amendments fundamentally altered constitutional understandings inherited from the eighteenth century. He treats men such as Bingham, Sumner, and Stevens—the leaders of the Republican Congress during radical Reconstruction—as not just on a par with Madison and Hamilton but, if anything, more important in shaping the Constitution that America obeys today.

Now Amar has written a "biography" of the Constitution, in which he proposes, by his own description, "to offer a comprehensive account of America's Constitution." The aspiration to completeness defines the structure of the book. Like a medieval glossator, Amar proceeds through every single section of the Constitution, from the Preamble to the Twenty-Seventh Amendment, expounding as he goes. But the book is more than a series of local insights. Amar has a comprehensive theory of the Constitution, and it animates his readings from start to finish. It is both a theory of constitutional history and a theory of the legitimacy of the Constitution as the country's paramount legal authority.

Amar's theory is that of a radical democrat. In his eyes, the legitimacy of law is a function of its process of enactment: the more democratic the process, the more authoritative the law. Thus he contends that if a federal statute conflicts with the provisions of a treaty between the United States and a foreign country, the statute should prevail. His reasoning is straightforward. Treaties are made by the assent of the president and the Senate alone, but statutes also require the concurrence of the House of Representatives, a larger legislative body closer to the people themselves. An enactment of the House, Senate, and president together has more democratic authority than an enactment of the Senate and president without the House. By the same logic, the greatest of all authorities is the Constitution, which was enacted more democratically than any other law. Unlike statutes, which are passed by the people's elected representatives, the Constitution was adopted—so the story goes—directly by the people themselves.

It would be naïve, of course, to imagine that the process by which the Constitution was written and ratified in the 1780s was democratic as we understand democracy. The disfranchisement of all women and almost all blacks, to say nothing of chattel slavery, would mock such a claim. Amar is keenly aware of these deficiencies, and he does not minimize them. He offers no apologia about virtual representation and little about the Constitution being democratic for its time. On the contrary, he mounts devastating criticisms of the ways in which slavery infected the Founders' Constitution, and these criticisms are not limited to well-known embarrassments such as the three-fifths compromise or the fugitive slave clause. Throughout his discussion of the original Constitution, Amar exposes the corrosive influence of slavery at almost every turn. The electoral college was a slave-ocratic mechanism, rigged to tilt presidential elections toward Southern candidates. The methods for allocating representatives in Congress yielded a system in which power within Southern states tilted toward the richer, slaveholding portions of those states, giving slaveowners disproportionate influence. And unlike many writers before him, Amar does not protest that at least the Constitution laid the seeds of slavery's eventual destruction: it would be comforting, he says, to believe that it did, but it didn't.

All that said, Amar does not reflexively trash the Founders for their failure to anticipate modern notions of democratic equality. Side by side with his relentless exposition of slavery's role, he describes little-noticed ways in which the adoption of the Constitution was a remarkably democratic act. Amar notes that many states that ordinarily limited voting to propertied citizens relaxed their property qualifications when it came to constitutional ratification, thus allowing a broader-than-usual electorate to decide the country's most fundamental question. This piece of history is not part of the common knowledge of constitutional lawyers, and Amar deserves credit for bringing it to the foreground.

AFTER AMAR IS THROUGH ANAlyzing the pre–Civil War Constitution, he turns to the Reconstruction amendments. It is here, in his account, that real democracy triumphs. Reconstruction ended slavery, decreed equality, and transformed huge numbers of black men from abject outsiders into citizens eligible to vote. No longer would racial caste belie the claim that the Constitution was the democratic instrument of the people. Indeed, part of the achievement of Amar's damning account of the ways in which slavery distorted the Founders' Constitution is that it presents the Constitution as having been inadequate at a time when—and precisely because—it failed to embody the will of the people in a properly democratic way.

Amar's theory of constitutional history and his theory of constitutional authority are thus two parts of an internally coherent whole. The Constitution is the paramount legal authority because it is the most democratic, emanating from the people themselves. Given that premise, Amar cannot locate the ultimate moment of enactment in the Founding, because a constitution so thoroughly infected by slavery cannot claim obedience by virtue of its democratic pedigree. Only later did emancipation, equal protection, and enfranchisement democratize the Constitution. For this reason, it must be to the Constitution of the 1860s, not to

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the Constitution of the 1780s, that modern Americans owe allegiance. For it was during Reconstruction that the people and the Constitution were finally brought together.

III.

AMAR'S CONSTITUTIONAL THEory is elegant, but it is significantly flawed. As a historical matter, his vision of Reconstruction is airbrushed to make it seem more democratic than it really was. And as a normative matter, democratic enactment cannot suffice to legitimate the Constitution, if only because of the passage of time. Regardless of the process by which the Constitution was adopted, today it compromises democracy by governing people who were unrepresented in its formation.

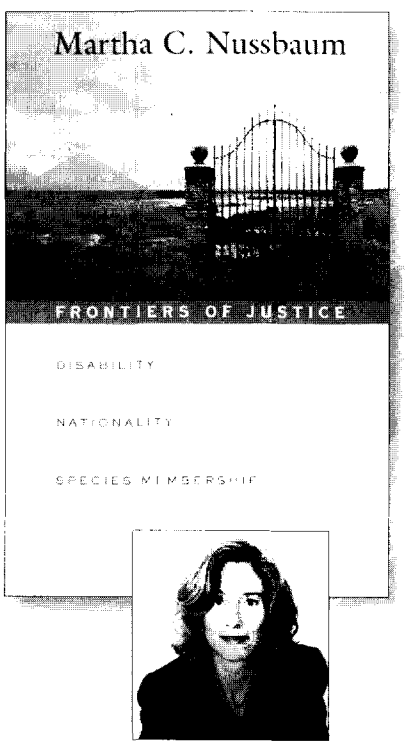
Since Reconstruction secures the democratic legitimacy of the Constitution in Amar's narrative, he needs to present the Reconstruction amendments as having been adopted in a democratically legitimate way. This takes some effort, and not only because the polity that elected the Congresses that drafted the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments excluded all women and almost all black men. The Thirty-Eighth and Thirty-Ninth Congresses also refused to seat representatives from the former Confederate states. As Bruce Ackerman has argued, Congress never could have mustered the two-thirds vote necessary for constitutional amendment if the Southerners had been permitted to sit. Moreover, Ackerman points out that Northern Republicans could not credibly exclude Southern states on the basis of secession, because the North's bedrock constitutional contention during the Civil War was that no state could leave the Union.

If the Reconstruction Amendments were imposed by the fiat of conquerors rather than adopted by legitimate democratic means, then Amar cannot maintain his central argument that Reconstruction provided the Constitution with a truly democratic pedigree. This is a serious problem for him, and he knows it. In a book whose text occupies nearly five hundred pages, the only time Amar discusses another modern theorist's work at length is when he engages Ackerman's account and defends the Reconstruction Congress's decision to exclude Southern representatives.

Fittingly, he proposes to justify excluding Southern states from Congress in the name of democracy itself. "Reconstruction pivoted on a remarkable reinterpretation of the Article IV republican-government clause," Amar explains. Under that clause as interpreted by the Supreme Court, a state whose government was not republican in form would be excluded from representation in Congress. Taking his cue from Sumner, Amar contends that this rule directed the exclusion of the former Confederate states in 1865 and 1866, when the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments were before Congress. Why? Because at that time, no ex-Confederate state permitted blacks to vote. After emancipation, such race-based disfranchisement was downright unrepublican. Accordingly, the Southern states were not qualified to sit in Congress precisely because they were insufficiently democratic. (Readers inclined to worry that Amar conflates democracy with republicanism should rest assured that earlier in the book he thoughtfully argues that those two concepts are less distinct in American constitutional tradition than we have been led to believe.)

The main glitch in the argument about republican forms of government, as Southerners protested at the time, is that most *Northern* states did not allow blacks to vote in 1865 and 1866. If race-based disfranchisement kept Alabama out of Congress, why could New Jersey sit there? Again following Sumner, Amar responds that disfranchisement in the North was of a different kind from disfranchisement in the South. In most Northern states, blacks constituted a tiny slice of the population. The disfranchisement of black voters in those states, though morally wrong, was not politically significant. In the South, however, blacks constituted more than a quarter of the population in every state. For Sumner, this meant that racial disfranchisement in Southern states made those more states oligarchies or aristocracies rather than republics. Amar echoes the claim, writing that "no truly 'republican' state circa 1865 had the right to disfranchise a quarter or more of its adult free male population."

This argument might make sense about Alabama and New Jersey. According to the most recent census when the



"Martha Nussbaum's impressive new book can be easily summarized as Rawls meets Aristotle...Well-argued and beautifully written, it is an important, provocative and thoroughly admirable book, and will be essential reading for anyone interested in the concepts of justice and moral entitlement."
—Mark Rowlands, TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

"In her new and pathbreaking book, Martha Nussbaum shows that the social contract tradition, despite its great insights, cannot handle some of the most important political problems of our day...This work will change how we think about the nature of social justice."
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Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments were debated, the population of Alabama was 46 percent black, and that of New Jersey was only 4 percent black. But if we compare other states, the argument falls apart. The same census recorded that in both Tennessee and Arkansas—former Confederate states excluded from Congress during the drafting of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments—blacks constituted 25.5 percent of the population. In Kentucky and Maryland, both Union states whose representatives sat continuously in Congress, the respective black populations were 20.4 percent and 24.9 percent. Can anyone really think that the difference between 24.9 percent and 25.5 percent is the difference between republicanism and oligarchy?

One suspects that Sumner's casuistry about states disfranchising "more than a quarter" of their people was neatly drawn to differentiate between Maryland, the blackest of the Union states, and Tennessee, the whitest of the Confederate ones. And one wishes that Amar had provided his readers with the relevant population figures, thus better enabling them to judge whether the principle of republicanism in fact succeeds in rescuing the procedural integrity of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments. Indeed, the omission of such important information indicates that readers should proceed with suspicion.

MOREOVER, THE TROUBLES with presenting the Reconstruction Constitution as having paramount legal authority because of its democratic enactment go well beyond the procedural irregularities of 1865 and 1866. Even if the Reconstructors had re-founded the Constitution through an unimpeachably democratic process, the idea that their deeds would have democratic authority today would founder on what might be called the inter-temporal problem of constitutional theory. That problem, in brief, is that nobody now living participated in ratifying the Constitution. Since the Constitution prevents political majorities in our own day from getting what they want, it constrains electorates that had no say in its formation.

If a polity democratically adopts limits on majority rule, those limits can be justified in the name of democracy itself: the people established a decision-making process, and now they live with it out of respect for that decision. But when a constitution outlives its adopters, it impedes the will of popular majorities on the basis of a decision in which the people bound had no role and were not represented. That is not democracy. (The problem could be avoided if the people today could freely change the Constitution, but the bar to amendment is set too high for this solution to succeed: a minority can block change by holding the support of just thirteen of the country's ninety-nine state legislative chambers, spread out across even the smallest states.)

To be sure, there are good reasons other than democracy for limiting the scope of majority rule. The rule of law is one, and concern for individual rights is another. But when such considerations justify limiting majority rule on the basis of an inherited Constitution, they do so in spite of the entailed compromise of democracy. No matter how democratically the Reconstruction Constitution was adopted, its democratic pedigree alone cannot be what establishes its authority today, because nineteenth-century Americans (like eighteenth-century Americans) had no democratic authority to bind the wholly different population that would reside in America in the twenty-first century.

SEVERAL CONSTITUTIONAL THEORISTS have tried to dissolve the problem of being constitutionally confined by the distant past by regarding "the people" as a personified and temporally extended entity. If the American people is a continuous moral agent that made the Constitution and now is governed by it, then the problem of one community making rules that bind another does not arise. Amar does not spell out the metaphysics of "the people," but his pervasive insistence upon democratic pedigree suggests that he regards the American people as a continuous entity for the purposes of defining self-government through time. Indeed, although the book's title states that it is the Constitution's biography that we are reading, Amar does not personify the document or make it an active character. The real protagonist of the book is the People, who enact and interpret and make and re-make the Constitution. "We the People" today are "We the People" of 1787—and more importantly, Amar would say, of 1868. In submitting to the authority of the Constitution, we merely accept what we ourselves agreed to.

This is a romantic obfuscation. Yes, national communities outlive individuals, and what happens in the history of one generation may constrain the behavior of those who follow. We inherit a particular set of problems and institutions that structure our politics, just as coming generations will inherit problems and institutions from us: if the federal government today spends trillions of dollars more than its revenues, future Americans may have to repay a large national debt. But we do not explain much about this complicated reality by saying that we chose the system we inherit, just as it would be perverse to justify the burden that fiscal deficits transmit to the future by saying that the whole nation over time has blessed the arrangement. It makes more sense to say that communities, like individuals, often operate under constraints that they did not choose and would not have chosen as an original matter.

Americans today have good reason to uphold the Constitution despite the fact that we did not choose it. A regime that establishes the rule of law, and protects unpopular minorities, and enjoys the loyalty of ordinary citizens, may be worth upholding even at the expense of a certain amount of democracy. Indeed, given the mystical nature of the assertion that "we" really did democratically agree to the Constitution, trying to ground its authority in inter-temporal consent suggests a lack of confidence in these other, less mysterious reasons for considering the Constitution authoritative.

IV.

EVEN IF THE CONSTITUTION cannot claim paramount legal status on the basis of its democratic pedigree, it still might be possible to credit Reconstruction with establishing the constitutional regime that Americans prize today. As noted earlier, democracy is not the only justification for subjecting majority will to constitutional limits. So if Reconstruction gave us the fundamental rights and institutional arrangements that make the Constitution worth having, constitutional history should give Reconstruction its due.

The idea that Reconstruction generated many of the most important principles of modern constitutional law is certainly plausible. One way or another, most fundamental rights that the Constitution protects are Fourteenth Amendment rights. Courts today deal with dis-

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crimination on grounds such as race and sex under the rubric of that Amendment's equal protection clause, and with the freedoms of speech and religion under its due process clause. (We often think of speech and religion as First Amendment concerns, but the First Amendment limits only the federal government. The rights listed in the First Amendment, and most of those in the remainder of the Bill of Rights as well, are guaranteed against state and local governments only through the Fourteenth Amendment.)

Amar contends that the rights protected under the Fourteenth Amendment today are immanent in the language of that amendment, properly understood. He is a self-described textualist, and a very creative one. And so he has little trouble reading the Fourteenth Amendment to require liberal and egalitarian arrangements that most modern Americans consider fundamental. Unfortunately, in showing how much can be done with a text, Amar often demonstrates by example why constitutional law should be skeptical of clever close readings.

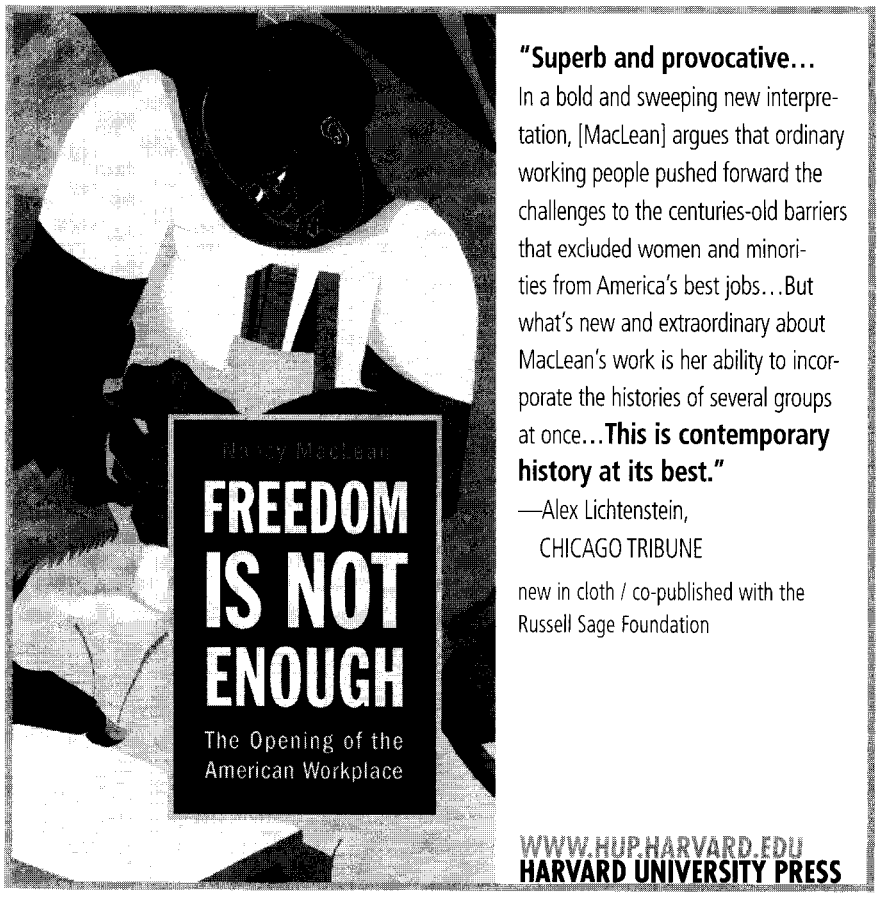
Consider his contention that the text of the Fourteenth Amendment, properly read, prohibits discrimination on the basis of immutable characteristics. In modern constitutional law, immutability is a leading concern of equal protection doctrine. It is easier to justify legislation that discriminates on the basis of, say, occupation (a mutable condition) than legislation that discriminates on the basis of skin color (an immutable one). But the text of the Fourteenth Amendment merely says that no state shall deny any person the equal protection of the laws. It does not specify that it is more concerned with equality between blacks and whites than with equality between opticians and optometrists. For this reason, the concern with immutability is best understood as a mediating principle that judges use to interpret the clause, not as a principle inscribed in the clause itself.

According to Amar, however, the very text of the amendment should guide us to see immutability as a core constitutional concern. How so? Well, he reasons, immutable characteristics are generally those that people have by accident of birth, and the text of the Fourteenth Amendment deals with birth explicitly. Its first words are "All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States...." Amar recommends that we read "born" as the critical term. The amendment's preoccupation with birth, he suggests, points to a general principle of birthright equality, according to which no person should be legally disadvantaged on the basis of a characteristic—such as race or sex—which is a mere accident of birth.

This is a little silly. Yes, the word "born" appears in the text, but a reasonable reader would hardly derive a general principle of opposition to legal discrimination based on birth status from that fact. For one thing, the sentence containing the word "born" itself discriminates on the basis of an unchosen birth status, denying citizenship to those people born in the United States who are not subject to American jurisdiction. For another, the sentence in which the word "born" appears deals with citizenship rather than equality, and nineteenth-century law was quite comfortable with the idea that people could be citizens without enjoying equal rights with one another: women born in the United States were citizens but could not vote.

To his credit, Amar couches this argument as an elaborate suggestion rather than insisting on the point. But he is less moderate elsewhere—such as in his contention that the Fourteenth Amendment incorporated the Bill of Rights against the states. As noted above, the Bill of Rights prior to the Civil War limited only the federal government. States were free to make their own rules about establishing religions, conducting searches and seizures, and so forth. Today, however, courts read the Fourteenth Amendment's due process clause to incorporate most of the substance of the first eight amendments. That is the legal rationale on which a state is today just as forbidden as the federal government to censor someone's speech or deny him a trial by jury.

As Amar has demonstrated in other writings, at least some of the people who drafted the Fourteenth Amendment intended it to incorporate provisions of the Bill of Rights against the states. What proportion of the amendment's ratifiers held that view, however, is at best a contestable question, and probably one on which historical scholarship will never



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be conclusive. Moreover, it is clear that courts did not apply the Bill of Rights against the states for many years after the Fourteenth Amendment was ratified. No Supreme Court decision limited state conduct on the basis of anything in the first ten amendments until 1897, and most provisions of the Bill of Rights were not incorporated against the states until several decades later. Accordingly, the incorporation of the Bill of Rights into the Fourteenth Amendment—like the use of the immutability idea to apply the equal protection clause—is better understood as a twentieth-century re-interpretation than as the product of nineteenth-century decision-making.

In Amar's view, however, the text itself shows that the Fourteenth Amendment incorporated the Bill of Rights. Central to his contention is that the Amendment "borrowed directly from the Bill itself with [its] language 'No ... shall ... make ... law ... abridg[ing]'—all words lifted directly from the First Amendment. Here the very text of the Fourteenth Amendment pointed the careful reader to its tight interlinkage with the Bill of Rights." The attempt to use these words to establish that the Bill of Rights is incorporated within the Fourteenth Amendment is valiant and even ingenious—but it is also slightly comical. The words "no," "shall," "make," and "law" are not obscure legal terminology, such that their use in one place points the reader to their use in another. ("Abridge" is a touch less banal, but only a touch.) The quoted words do not even appear in the same order in the First Amendment as in the Fourteenth, much less in a row as a coherent phrase.

Indeed, if find-a-word were a good method of constitutional interpretation, the Fourteenth Amendment might point less to the First Amendment than to Article I, Section Ten, which lists other restrictions on the powers of states. Article I, Section Ten shares with the Fourteenth Amendment not only the words "no," "shall," "make," and "law," but also the words "state" and "any"—six common words rather than the First Amendment's five. What's more, these six words appear in the same order in the Fourteenth Amendment as in Section Ten: "No state shall ... make ... any ... law." With a logic at least equal to Amar's, the careful reader could infer that the Fourteenth Amendment's echoing Article I, Section Ten more clearly than it echoes any other constitutional provision indicates that the Fourteenth Amendment's only textual forerunners were those sections of the Constitution that specifically restricted the states. Restrictions on the federal government, such as those in the Bill of Rights, would be implicitly disclaimed.

HERE AND ELSEWHERE, AMAR'S parsing of constitutional language is tendentious, and readers should keep their wits about them when assessing his textual arguments. A further illustration: in the course of an otherwise insightful argument that the Founders were more afraid of repression by armies than repression by navies, Amar purports to draw support from "pointed Article VI language describing the Constitution as the law of *'the Land'*" (the emphasis is Amar's), as if those words meant that the Constitution imposed no limits on what the government could do on the water. But the reason that Article VI describes the Constitution as the "law of the land" is that the phrase is a legal term of art in use since the Magna Carta, not because the Framers chose words that would create a constitutional distinction between surf and turf. Nobody believes that the Navy could establish a religion so long as tithing and devotion were required only at sea.

Amar is a systematic thinker, so the periodic wackiness of his textualism is not likely to be mere noise. Instead, his readings express a prior set of theoretical commitments, and it is profitable to ask what theory would prompt Amar to believe that straining and squinting at the text as he does is a good way to interpret the Constitution. Perhaps the best way to understand what we might call his hyper-textualism is that wringing reams of meaning from the document's jots and tittles is positively desirable, if not strictly necessary, under Amar's substantive theory of constitutional legitimacy. For if the Constitution's claim to authority is that it is the democratic instruction of the people themselves, and if (as Amar has argued elsewhere) constitutional decision-making should proceed more by determining what the people really instructed than by thinking about judicially elaborated precedent or sound present policy, then constitutional law cannot get very far unless interpreters can divine a lot of meaning from a short and sacred text.

The implausibility of several of Amar's readings suggests the limits of textualism as a strategy for deriving constitutional law. Few students of the document will be more intelligent than he is, and fewer still will be more determined to understand its language and structure systematically, so if zealous faith in the text goes awry in Amar's hands, it is probably fated to go awry more generally. Legal interpretation must treat text respectfully, but plumbing individual words for subtle or hidden meanings is rarely a good way to approach the Constitution. To know the real Constitution—that is, the system by which American government has actually operated and the constraints that do rightly limit electoral politics—one should ask how decision-makers have behaved in practice and what fundamental values majoritarianism is prone to disserve, not just what the text says, and certainly not what the text could mean if subjected to homiletic exegesis. And no matter how cleverly one reads the Fourteenth Amendment, most of the modern doctrines that protect Americans against discrimination and against the deprivation of fundamental liberties are twentieth-century developments, not the commands of people speaking to us from Reconstruction.

Two Views of Napoleon by David

The horse, distracted by a pebble-spill
That rattles down the cliff-face and explodes
In volleys like a rain of musketballs,
Rears up in panic as his eye protrudes
With noticing so many ways to die.
Knowing that what defines the hero is
The magnitude of what he doesn't see,
The rider flings his arm and turns his face
Toward the unpeopled, unobstructed blue;
Blue that returns, but darker now, in drapes
That dim the study where he pages through
His drafts and memos, crossing out mistakes,
His sword-arm tucked inside a straining vest
And face gone slack with resignation, having
Realized too late that what he's forced
To care about, or try to, makes the king.

ADAM KIRSCH

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When the present generation of federal judges was in law school, the Civil War was the chronological midpoint of American history. It was natural to see the Founding and Reconstruction as separate concerns. As the history of the United States comes to span four or five hundred years, however, it will become easier to perceive the entire sweep of events from the 1770s to the 1860s as a continuous century of nation-building. We are moving, slowly but perhaps inexorably, toward a perspective from which we can more easily see the Civil War and Reconstruction as part of America's origins.

Amar does a great service in advancing such a future perspective. By insisting that our Constitution is largely what Reconstruction made it, he helps to correct the prevailing tendency to focus on a few short years in the eighteenth century. For that contribution, all who work in constitutional law must appreciate this book. But just as it is a fallacy to locate the authority and the meaning of the Constitution in the 1780s, it is a fallacy to repeat the exercise with the 1860s, or with some combination of the two, or with any other period or periods of the receding past. Taking democracy seriously precludes imagining that generations now gone had the right to dictate our method of government today, and that is as true of generations gone one hundred years as of generations gone one hundred years before that. Taking constitutionalism seriously entails the willingness to temper simple democracy with other fundamental values. We love our Constitution, and we love democracy. But we cannot square the circle. ■

Peter N. Miller
Peripheries

TRICKSTER TRAVELS:
A SIXTEENTH-CENTURY MUSLIM
BETWEEN WORLDS
By Natalie Zemon Davis
(Hill and Wang, 435 pp., $30)

I.

ONCE UPON A TIME THERE was a bird that could live on land or underwater. He lived with the birds until the king of the birds came demanding taxes, and then the bird flew into the sea and joined the fish, proclaiming he was one of their own. When the king of the fish came, also asking for taxes, the bird shot back up into the air and told the birds the same story. And so he continued, living tax-free, but, more importantly, also culture-free, fully identifying with wherever he was at that moment, but only for that moment.

The hero of Natalie Zemon Davis's book tells this tale to explain his own plural loyalties. Davis uses it as a key to understanding his life and his work—hence the trickster of the title. And we, in turn, might see it as a feature of this fine book, at once a seemingly familiar life of a famous author and a very different kind of biography altogether.

Those who have chafed against the maxim that history is written by the winners have, since the middle of the nineteenth century, tried to find ways of telling the story of the "losers." When the "winners" were identified with great men (kings, generals, artists) and great polities (states, empires), the turn was to social and economic history. When it was recognized that the decisive question was not about "winners" so much as "writers," the problem became more complex. Since the study of the past could only be conducted by means of historical sources, the challenge was twofold: finding new ones, and making the old ones tell different stories. Art history, archaeology, and anthropology have added material artifacts and ritual to our store of evidence. Similarly, historians' increasing sensitivity to the implicit subjects of existing texts has opened up vast new horizons. The peasants of medieval Montaillou brought back to life by Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, or the miller Menochio conjured out of inquisitorial documents by Carlo Ginzburg, or Natalie Zemon Davis's own Martin Guerre, are etched in our minds with the precision and the respect that had previously been accorded society's winners: important people who wrote themselves or who were the subject of others' writing.

Now Davis brings this project of twentieth-century historiography full circle: not writing the life of someone unknown who did not write, but writing the life of someone famous who wrote a great deal but not much about his own life. The challenge here is to coax biographical details out of a non-biographical text. Few are better at this than Davis. And in pursuing this project, in tackling a well-known figure about whom little is known, Davis has poured new life into an old-fashioned genre: the "Life and Work" biography re-interpreted as the "History of the Book."

AL-HASAN IBN MUHAMMAD ibn Ahmad al-Wazzan was born in Granada around 1486–1488. He died, perhaps in Tunis, sometime after 1532. Between 1518 and 1527, this same person lived in Rome and went by the names Joannes Leo (Latin), Giovanni Leone (Italian), and Yuhanna al-Asad (Arabic). Posterity knows him by still another name, given posthumously: Leo Africanus, his nom de plume. But who was he? This is the puzzle facing Davis. Unlike Martin Guerre, whose story lay buried in an archive, but buried whole, the man formerly known as Leo Africanus hides in plain sight.

His great claim on posterity is an extraordinary book that he wrote during his Roman period, published in 1550 with the title *The Description of Africa*. It was the first modern treatment of northern and western Africa, written by someone who had traveled its length and its breadth (though there remains some dispute about how far south of the Sahara he actually went) as a diplomat for the sultan of Fez. When he was captured by pirates on the way back to Morocco from a diplomatic mission to Cairo, al-Hasan al-Wazzan was an important functionary. This much was recognized by the pirate chief who thought him a handsome-enough gift to present outright to the Medici Pope Leo X. This was the Rome of the High Renaissance, described for our time so memorably by Ingrid Rowland. Al-Wazzan was cat-

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echized by the pope's own master of ceremonies and two other bishops, and baptized under the godfathership of three cardinals, among them Egidio da Viterbo, diplomat, orator, and humanist, in whose orbit he would remain. Thus launched into the highest of Roman society, Joannes Leo the Christian spent a decade in Rome working as a scholar and scholarly informant.

Hungering after the smell of her human quarry, like the ogre celebrated by Marc Bloch, Davis hunts down her man in the margins of books that he read (the list of his borrowings from the Vatican Library has survived), between the lines of those that he wrote, in the traces preserved in his friends' work, and in the worlds that he passed through. One can read Davis's book and learn a tremendous amount very easily—about the Sultanate of Morocco in the early sixteenth century, about Mameluk Cairo, about living in Rome in a cardinal's entourage, about the vicissitudes of a manuscript in the Renaissance, and of course about Africa and its complexities. Part of a wave of new French, German, and North African scholarship on al-Wazzan, this is a beautifully written and thoughtful book that shows off some of the sophisticated tools for reading and parsing evidence that historians have been developing in recent years.

THE STORY UNFOLDS SO SEAMlessly and touches so many interesting questions that, if it were not for Davis's calling attention to it, one could almost miss the most startling feature of this portrait: its story is presented to the reader nearly always in the conditional. "Perhaps," "could have," "surely," "might have"—these are the book's keywords. And these signal the extreme delicacy of Davis's challenge. As a historian, she must stay within the ground rules of never asserting what cannot be backed up by evidence. As a storyteller, she needs to fill out the contours of her subject's life. And because her subject says so little about it, the challenge is acute.

Where Simon Schama boldly went in *Dead Certainties*, and where many others have aspired, though with more timidity, to go, Davis quite rightly fears to tread. She goes up to, but never crosses, the thin—indeed, the vanishingly thin—line separating the true from the false, that which can be inferred from the careful reading of contemporary sources and that which is invented to fill gaps in those sources. Davis is so good at capturing the texture of the past that we can manage the imaginative leap from Fez or Rome to al-Wazzan's life in Fez or Rome. And yet there is something a little unsettling in Davis's narrative. With all the "could haves" and "might haves" being thrown about, one still wants to know not what could have been heard, but what actually was heard; not who might have been present, but who actually was present. Even in the notes, where professionals might expect some consideration, this distinction is not made clear.

WHAT, THEN, DOES DAVIS have to work with? In the foreground, as it were, we have al-Wazzan's texts, manuscript and printed. The manuscripts include a book on Arabic grammar and prosody, a *Lives of Illustrious Men among the Arabs*, and a trilingual dictionary on which he collaborated. (Lost are a study of the North African school of Islamic legal interpretation and an epitome of Muslim chronicles.) A manuscript (though not the autograph) of *The Description of Africa* survives in Rome, along with three sixteenth-century Italian editions, and translations into French, Latin, and English. And in the background, we have the contemporary worlds of Africa and Italy that we know he knew, and that Davis has painstakingly re-created. In between, in the shadows, are the few individuals who were in contact with him and whose works either bear the traces of that contact or allow us to infer points of contact.

Davis moves among these registers with a sure hand. Working with the manuscript that was probably copied from his autograph, she shows how al-Wazzan's text was altered when prepared for publication. The title, to begin with, was originally *The Book of the Cosmography and Geography of Africa*. The Venetian diplomat, scholar, and editor Giovanni Battista Ramusio made this into *The Description of Africa*. The French translation of 1556 worked hard to wrench al-Wazzan's distant assessment of Islam into a poisonous denunciation. So did the Latin translation of that same year, as well as the English translation of 1600. (One is reminded of the similar pollution of Marco Polo's book by one of its Dominican translators.)

Why does all this matter? Because comparing the manuscript with the printed versions enables Davis to "show us the pressures under which Yuhanna al-Asad lived in Italy and the ways in which his European interpreters wanted to reshape him." Writing in a new language, in a new country, and with a new identity, al-Wazzan tried to remain as free as a bird among the birds or a fish among the fish. As he himself put it, "If the Africans are being vituperated, [this writer] will use as a clear excuse that he was not born in Africa, but in Granada. And if the Granadans are being railed against, he will find the excuse that he was not brought up in Granada." Davis suggests that this amphibiousness was not only intentional, but also the key to understanding al-Wazzan's life as a whole.

WHILE TRYING TO REACH his new audience through careful translation of words and alien concepts, al-Wazzan also tried to keep faith with his old community by fighting shy of the popular misconceptions that would have gone down easier with his new readers. There were attempts to pair African figures with European ones, for easier comprehension of the unfamiliar through the familiar; and there were the direct comparisons of customs and manners (foodways, attire, urban life). And nowhere is al-Wazzan's scrupulous attempt at "objectivity" more tested than in his comments on Islam.

"Here," Davis writes, "we can see the tension within himself and with his imagined readers, Christian and Muslim, at its strongest." Her very precise and nuanced treatment of this in the *Cosmography* is exemplary. From al-Wazzan's suppression of standard Muslim phraseology, to his idiosyncratic use of the word "Macometto" and "Macomettani" for the more typical "Maumetto" or Mahumettani" (itself a substitution of prophet for deity that reflected the Christian view of Islam as a false religion), to his praise for the sensibility of Islam and its lifestyle, his approach was clearly to avoid adopting a polarized worldview. Indeed, his treatment of some Islamic cultural practices such as divination, miracles, and the ban on wine was decidedly "ambivalent."

As for the belief in holy war, al-Wazzan rejected it. Both his own experience in Morocco when confronting local jihadist preachers and his perspective on Islamic history led him demurely to discount, or at least to defer to the distant future, the arrival of the Mahdi, or

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redeemer, who would destroy the unbelievers and usher in the universal caliphate. Startling, therefore, are two instances where al-Hasan ibn Muhammad al-Wazzan seems to slip into the persona of Giovanni Leone. He refers to the "coming of the pestilence of Muhammad" and elsewhere to "the folly of Muhammad in the Qur'an." Davis's explanation for why this might have happened takes us into the most intriguing aspect of her book.

II.

FOR DAVIS, THE CHARACTERISTIC feature of al-Hasan/Leo is his "betweenness." (This is not the same thing as "hybridity": here the worlds seem suspended rather than synthesized or assimilated.) In 1995, Davis published *Women on the Margins: Three Seventeenth-Century Lives*, a book that placed each figure on the periphery of one culture. "Marginality" relative to two cultures here becomes "betweenness." The subtitle of this book explicitly places him "between worlds," but the table of contents is much more precise: he is "Between Africa and Europe" and "Between Islam and Christianity." "Crossings," "Affinities," "Translations," and "Connections" are other *Stichwörter* among the chapter titles. These are, of course, Davis's observations, her ways of making sense of his life.

But what did al-Wazzan himself think of this life he came to lead? Consider its most striking feature: his baptism and conversion in 1518. What did this mean to him? We do not know. What kind of Christianity was this? We do not know. How did it affect his view of Islam? We do not know. This is the reality that Davis works against. She surmises that the conversion was essentially forced—the alternative was slavery or imprisonment—and its spiritual traction, therefore, superficial; but she cannot be sure.

She raises the possibility that al-Wazzan's state of mind was like that of a Marrano or Mudéjar, "persons forced to convert or conform to one religion while inwardly holding to and even clandestinely practicing their old faith." Like a good historian, she explores the tradition of this kind of precautionary dissimulation in Islam. But like the best historians, she notes that this tactical schizophrenia—the false outside to safeguard the true inside—"does not explain" the judicious evenhandedness of his Italian book. Faced with this dead end, it is a bit surprising that Davis, who in her earlier work showed herself so at home in anthropology and sociology when these offered perspectives that compensated for the silence of the sources, does not turn to the now large body of work on the European converso tradition and its mentality.

Moreover, the silences themselves may not be so deafening, may not so cry out for interpretation. Davis often assumes, when others fail to mention al-Wazzan when they could have mentioned him, or when he fails to mention aspects of his life when he could have mentioned them, that there is some crumb of meaning to be brushed out against the grain. But scholarly friends back then—and now, too?—often do not mention colleagues when we expect they should, and texts that seem to demand autobiographical insertion often remain stolidly impervious to our expectations.

Insofar as these silences are used to help explain the character of the *Cosmography*, we might also wonder at Davis's reluctance to look at other approaches to studying what we might call strategically silent texts. The most famous of these is Leo Strauss's essay of 1941, "Persecution and the Art of Writing," in which he linked this style of literary performance to the problematic insistence by certain medieval Jewish and Muslim philosophers on the freedom to reason in matters of revealed truth—an insistence that could not be expressed publicly in societies not committed to popular enlightenment. Whereas Strauss's philosophers worried about being seen as heretical because of their "rationalism," Davis presents al-Wazzan as writing esoterically when giving simply a "description"—as if recognizing that empirical information had become as threatening as philosophy. Simply holding up the mirror to another society, through the kind of ethnographic observations that a traveling diplomat or merchant might make, threatened self-satisfied stereotypes and ideological presuppositions, and those with a stake in perpetuating them.

DAVIS ASTUTELY OBSERVES THAT by putting himself forward as a figure of authority in the *Cosmography*—as the "describer"—al-Wazzan broke with *isnad*, understood in Islam as the legitimating authority of a chain of textual transmission. Instead, Davis argues, al-Wazzan used the freedom of his own deracination "to claim a different basis for his authority as a commentator on the world at a time of new and mixed identity." For Davis, it is this "mixed identity" that fascinates her, and serves as the key to her interpretation.

It makes sense, therefore, that the individuals with whom al-Wazzan might best have connected were Jews. They, too, were "between Islam and Christianity." And among them, too, were some who were also "between Africa and Europe." In the household of his patron, Egidio da Viterbo, whom he tutored in Arabic, was Elijah Levita, brought from Venice in 1515 to teach the patron Hebrew, but already the greatest living scholar of the Masora, the Jewish textual science that included *isnad*, or legitimating transmission, but also the rules for reading and emending that guaranteed that transmission. Davis is superb on their relationship, and also on al-Wazzan's friendship with Jacob Mantino, a Jewish doctor in Bologna whose family had left Catalonia for Italy at about the same time that al-Wazzan's had left Andalusia for Fez.

With Mantino, al-Wazzan collaborated on a trilingual Hebrew-Arabic-Latin dictionary (it was given to a Spanish diplomat in 1542 and is now in the Escorial), and Davis eloquently evokes the cultural crossings at stake in such a project. With Levita, al-Wazzan was brought face-to-face with the explosive argument that the transmission of sacred texts was a human affair. The Masoretes, who lived in the Galilee in the ninth and tenth centuries, were the scholars and editors who gave the Hebrew Bible its final form; but even if they were responsible only for codifying an existing transmission, Levita's insistence on their historical existence and on the impact of their work broke the wall separating Scripture

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from its history. No wonder, then, that Protestant fundamentalist Bible scholars fought hard for a century to insist, *pace* Levita, that the vowel points were handed down on Sinai.

But this kind of "historical" rationalism, like the "rationalism" of the traveler's blunt and untheoretical descriptions, extended to a widening circle. The very years in which al-Wazzan established himself in Rome saw a series of publications whose implications would culminate in the revolutionary claims of Spinoza. In 1516 Erasmus published his Latin translation of the New Testament, threatening the monopoly of Jerome's Vulgate. In 1517, Agostino Giustiniani in Genoa published an edition of the Psalms that contained the text in five languages—Hebrew, Latin, Greek, Aramaic, and Arabic—all printed side by side. This "polyglot" text, which made close comparison possible, and thus made more apparent the divergences among versions of the Bible that were all considered sacred by the Church, was only a dress rehearsal for a much grander project completed the same year in Spain. In the old Roman university town of Alcalá, a group of humanists under the general organization of Queen Isabella's former confessor, Cardinal Ximénes, set out to produce an edition of the Bible containing the Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and Aramaic versions on the same page. This first Polyglot Bible—others with increasing numbers of languages would be produced in Antwerp, Paris, and London—represented a strange confidence in the compatibility of faith and philology. The scholars who did this work, and the patrons who funded these astonishingly beautiful (and expensive) projects, believed that the truth of revelation could not only sustain the scientific ordering of the versions, but could even be more clearly revealed in it.

Davis suggests that al-Wazzan's shocking lapses in his otherwise neutral treatment of Islam—"pestilential" and "folly," he called it—stemmed in part from an awareness, gained through his relationship with Egidio and Levita, of just this "growing knowledge of the vulnerability of holy texts and the complications of language." But we can go further: these lapses point to a fundamental shift in direction between al-Wazzan's Islamic tradition and that of his European friends. What Levita and the Polyglot projects launched had—and still has—nothing comparable in Islam. The historical study of the Bible, undertaken by believers but no less scientifically for that belief, marks a crucial moment not only in the passage toward the Spinozistic train wreck—toward secularization—but also toward the much more interesting psychic landscape of "late humanism," where learning operated with the confidence that it reinforced belief and belief acted as if learning were no threat to itself. From this perspective, we might conclude that an entire society, and not just one fascinating visitor, was undertaking a voyage "between worlds."

Yet it was a part of the "betweenness" of the times that someone like Egidio da Viterbo, who could play host to a great Jewish scholar and study Arabic with an African diplomat while supporting humanist scholarship on the Bible, could also denounce the very idea of a community of faith embracing all the offspring of Abraham. Davis notes that al-Wazzan "would have shaken his head" at Egidio's unwillingness to see in Islam anything but an enemy. Had the Muslim-turned-Christian himself really transcended this division? Davis wants us to think so, and her reading of his nuances leads us in that direction.

But with this we really are at the limit of Davis's ventriloquizing. The price she pays for all those "might haves" and "perhapses" is an inability to plumb her subject's deepest self. What Davis's method gains in extensiveness it loses in intensiveness. Were al-Wazzan the person Davis wishes him to be, he would be thinking the kind of thoughts Goethe so bravely put into song:

> God's is the Orient!
> God's is the Occident!
> Northern and Southern lands
> Rest in peace in his hands.

But these were—and are still—rare thoughts, and to push readers toward them requires evidence that Davis does not possess.

"BETWEENNESS" SUGGESTS A position relative to an axis—in this case, Christianity/Islam. (Almost no one in Europe thought of "Europe" as an identity around 1500, and probably no one in "Africa" did either.) But this division was never so clear, because what it meant to be a Christian was not so clear. For a very long time, the Eastern Churches, whether the Greek Orthodox or the various Monophysite and Diophysite heresies, were viewed (at least by Roman eyes) as much more pestilential than Islam. Were a serious history of "orientalizing" prejudices to be written, most of it would be taken up with the condescension of the Latins toward the Greeks, Nestorians, Maronites, Copts, Jacobites, and Abyssinians. Al-Wazzan arrived in Rome just as it was waking up to these differences and yet striving to homogenize them into a simple us-versus-them. His patron, Pope Leo X, was intensely interested in promoting Oriental studies in order to reach out to these Christian sectaries. The stakes in this initiative were huge—the pope sponsored publication of a breviary in Arabic in 1514, probably the first Arabic book printed in Europe—and became inescapably clear only a few years later.

For when Luther's reformers claimed for themselves the mantle of a pure, primitive Christianity shorn of Roman accretions and luxuries, the papacy's backers confidently asserted the universality, or "Catholicism," of the Roman church. Winning over the Eastern Christians was an essential piece of the argument. All this played out in the arena of the Counter-Reformation, during the last decades of the sixteenth century and the first few of the seventeenth. But already in Giovanni Leone's Rome there was a recognition that the world was not divided neatly into two parts—that "between-ness" was a phenomenon endemic to Christian history, too.

THE EXTENDED CAUTION MATters so much because Davis's elegant book lies foursquare in the center of the hotly disputed territory called "Orientalism." Her non-ideological precision, and the affectingly human scale of her argument, will do much to take the heat—and the wind—out of any vulgar sloganeering. The story of al-Wazzan is almost made to order for the post–September 11 anti–"clash of civilizations" crowd, but Davis keeps any such presentism firmly outside her narrative. She also sheds light, implicitly, on an unexamined aspect of the "Orientalist" critique of Western culture: treatments of the premodern Islamic world often differ from those of the pre-modern West because of the radical disparity of source materials.

There could be no better example of this than the life of al-Hasan ibn Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Wazzan. For,

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most obviously, Davis could not have written her book had her hero not been captured and made into a published author in the West. Even her account of his life in Africa comes from the *Cosmography* that he wrote during his Roman interlude. Yes, she argues that this is a book he could have written in Africa—but, we must ask, would it in that case have survived for us to read it? And when her man returns to Africa at the end of his life and the paper trail turns cold, Davis the historian has to go quiet, too. This is a "structural orientalism" that not even her imagination can overcome.

While much of her book's ingenuity is a necessary response to the limits of Western archives, their spotty silences are nothing compared with the total absence of material from al-Wazzan's Maghreb. Where the Ottomans' writ ran, historians can at least hope that some echo found its way back to the chancellery in Istanbul to await discovery. But for Mameluk Egypt, or Hafsid Tunisia, or Barbarossa's Algiers, or the Wattasid's own Fez, there are no surviving archives: we have to read about them through the darkling glass of Occidental eyes, preserved in Occidental archives. There may be literary and visual sources, but the absence of printing and institutional collecting has limited their preservation. In any event, this is still not the kind of impersonal, non-literary, official and semi-official bureaucratic documentation upon which modern European historiography is based, and which enabled Davis to write her earlier books.

"BETWEENNESS" CAN ALSO mean "nowhere." Al-Wazzan may have returned to Fez, but he could not go home again. He is last recorded in Tunis. It is instructive to compare this model of "betweenness" with an ostensibly similar motif that has been a central Occidental aspiration from the very beginning of the Occident: that of "the citizen of the world." Here is how it was applied, for example, to Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc, my own favorite seventeenth-century European Christian: the study of other cultures, his biographer observed, enabled him "to elevate his mind above the vulgar condition, and though he defend his own Country's manners, yet to be indifferently inclined towards all men, and to become like Socrates, a Citizen, not of one Country only, but of the whole World." "Betweenness" may be a more realistic assessment of the human condition, but it is made of thinner stuff, offering more bitter comforts.

And is "betweenness" a rich enough condition to warrant Davis's identification of al-Wazzan with the mythical "trickster"? Is he a figure of superpotent, quasi-divine, transformative liminality? Or is he a poor wretch who struggles to preserve himself and, perhaps, also his self-respect when brought against his will to a hostile civilization? The trickster belongs to two worlds; but al-Wazzan, in the end, belongs to none. The trickster changes worlds, but al-Wazzan may have been changed by them—though even here we cannot be sure. Maybe to those, now, who wish to have their tricksters and their identities, too, al-Wazzan seems ripe for re-making in this image, but it is unlikely that he would recognize himself in this aspect of Davis's portrait.

The silence surrounding his end is amplified by the dwindling memories of those who knew the man in Rome, and by their dwindling numbers. Egidio da Viterbo died in 1532, Levita and Mantino in 1549. Those who could have come to know the man from his book encountered, thanks to Ramusio, a different person: "Leo Africanus." There is something poignant about this double effacement, the human accelerating the natural. But could al-Hasan al-Wazzan ever really slip into oblivion, like the proverbial fish that leaves no trace as it passes on?

Of course not. As the sociologist Andrew Abbott has wisely suggested, the "historicality of individuals" is communicated through all their contacts as well as through the residue of those contacts, whether memorialized in some external form, or lodged in memory, or transmuted in others' re-workings of these residues over time. Clearly, the "historicality" of someone like al-Hasan al-Wazzan would have to be hunted much as Davis has hunted it, though his every ramifying impact would continue ceaselessly up through her own work and beyond. And since this kind of "perfect" reception history is only for God to write, it reminds us that "outcomes" in history are never fixed for all time. Something of the al-Hasan al-Wazzan who may or may not have been forgotten in the sixteenth century was preserved, if somewhat incognito, in "Leo Africanus," and though he, too, eventually faded from memory, he has now gained a new lease on life, and perhaps a new physiognomy. At any given point in the past five hundred years, our verdict on his life, its "outcome," might have seemed very different. With this marvelous book, the trickster has been launched on yet another journey. ■

CORRESPONDENCE

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less surveillance of Americans fails to consider a more meaningful way to get Congress on record: pass a statute explicitly requiring judicial review of the terrorist surveillance program ("Big Russ," April 3). This would implicitly rebuke the administration for ignoring the Fourth Amendment and the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. Of course, such a statute—like censure—may not pass the Republican-controlled Senate and House, but the attempt would achieve everything that a meaningless censure could (and more) without appearing to engage Democrats in the kind of tactics that leave voters cold.

JEFF BLATTNER
Bethesda, Maryland

CHILD PSYCHOLOGY

KATHERINE MARSH, IN CONSIDERing scholar Linda R. Hirshman's case for one-child families, misses a larger demographic aspect of that argument ("Child Proof," March 13). It takes 2.1 children per woman to replenish the population. Having one child per woman is not enough. And, when a society's population stops reproducing, it starts to grow old—with dire economic and political consequences. Eventually, the society will either have to import laborers from the outside—creating massive new problems in the process, as is now happening in Europe—or face annihilation. One also cannot help but shudder at the vision of a world of lonely adults from one-child families with no aunts, uncles, cousins, or any other relatives to support and advise them.

ANDREW BELL
Hamilton, New York

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Prison Break

AUGUSTIN DE LA PEÑA IS one of America's foremost authorities on boredom. A Stanford-educated psychophysiologist working at a sleep-disorders center in South Texas, de la Peña has just finished a nearly 1,000-page treatise on the subject, complete with hundreds of references and five appendices. The book took him 20 years to write. The only problem is that he can't find a publisher. "I don't know if anybody'll be interested, because boredom is such a hard sell," he says.

THESE ARE TOUGH TIMES FOR BOREDOM. Television stalks us everywhere, from SUV back seats to elevators. We squander hours online, plunging through Internet wormholes. (Recently, I found myself at the website of the Argentine Air Force and suddenly wondered, like an awakening drunk, *how did I get here*? In slow moments at work, I don't lean back and contemplate the Big Picture; I check in on *Gawker*.) We burn time trading moronic instant messages and emails; one friend regularly sends me links to stories about misbehaving chimps. And, now, the proliferation of handheld diversions—the BlackBerry, the video iPod—is dealing a death blow to the idle moment. Especially in Washington, it has become permissible to check one's BlackBerry mid-conversation. And, just between us, I may once have glanced at mine at a urinal.

IN SOME QUARTERS, BOREDOM'S DEMISE has been met with triumphalism. Earlier this year, the famously excitable Dallas Mavericks owner Mark Cuban announced the "end of boredom" on his blog. "Portable media devices," Cuban declared, with the certitude only a billionaire dot-com CEO can muster, "have solved what has been a generations-old nuisance for all of us, boredom." Sharper minds than Cuban's have gone a step further. Steven Johnson, author of the 2005 polemic *Everything Bad Is Good for You: How Today's Popular Culture Is Actually Making Us Smarter*, argues that our culture of constant distraction is pumping up our IQs. "[M]ass media is supplying an increasingly rigorous mental workout," Johnson writes. True, "The Simpsons" is worlds beyond "The Brady Bunch," and video games like "Civilization IV" don't numb the brain like "Donkey Kong" did. But people like Johnson are too busy celebrating the quality of our culture to question the sheer *quantity* of it; and people like Cuban are too enamored of their handheld devices to consider that boredom may not be our enemy.

THE BADMOUTHING OF BOREDOM IS neither surprising nor new. Kierkegaard, after all, proclaimed it "the root of all evil." Even de la Peña argues that boredom actually drives nations to war. And there's nothing good to say about deep, existential boredom—the overall loss of interest in the world that basically amounts to depression and is roughly what the French mean, in their snooty way, by ennui. (The British actor George Sanders left a suicide note that declared, "Dear World: I am leaving because I am bored.") Nor can I defend the boredom of being trapped in the presence of a bore—a Downing Street Memo obsessive, for instance, or maybe David Broder.

BUT I CAN'T STAND BY AND LET PEOPLE deride the boredom of simply having "nothing to do." I mean the tedium of standing in a line, waiting at the DMV, lying sleeplessly at night—situations in which time pulls a switcheroo on us; when, instead of being short on time as usual, we've suddenly got way too much of it. For a little while, we are reminded of the stark and elemental fact that we are at time's mercy. As Lars Svendsen, a philosopher of boredom fortunate enough to have been published, has written, "[W]e experience time as time."

I WON'T ARGUE THAT BOREDOM IS FUN, exactly. But it is a kind of challenge. It sets you up on a date with yourself and challenges you to find some chemistry. The art historians Rudolf and Margot Wittkower have written about "creative idleness"—time spent doing nothing, often in solitude—that produced some of the greatest Renaissance art. Prison, with its enforced idleness, can be a laboratory for thought—St. Paul, Miguel de Cervantes, Martin Luther King Jr., Mahatma Gandhi, and Ezra Pound all wrote behind bars. Jail time can do wonders for lesser lights, too. Tupac Shakur read Machiavelli and wrote the screenplay for his upcoming movie, *Live 2 Tell*, while in the slammer. Chuck Colson went from Watergate crook to godly minister.

OF COURSE, YOU DON'T NEED TO COMmit a felony to discover the joys of boredom. And it doesn't take a Luddite to endorse stepping out of the technology vortex for some unmediated time alone. Lately, I've come to look forward to long rides on the train from Washington to New York—where there's no WiFi and not a television in sight. Amtrak's "quiet cars" even prohibit cell phones. Turning off the BlackBerry and just looking out the window feels like an act of spiritual emancipation. And perhaps only one of Amtrak's famous delays can help me achieve the "profound boredom" that Heidegger recommended for its clarifying power.

GRANTED, FEW OF US ARE LIKELY TO have blinding existential insights just because we're out of BlackBerry service range. For me, boredom tends to produce ruminations more along the lines of whether I should move to a new apartment. But it's a start. In this moment of anti-boredom triumphalism, there's something creepy about our constant flight from ourselves. Our fear of boredom suggests a kind of self-loathing. What are we so afraid of? Anyone who can't bear a few minutes of his own company should probably ask himself why before buying a ticket to *V for Vendetta*.

EVERY TIME A NEW SIDEKICK IS SOLD, Augustin de la Peña's message grows more urgent. But, unfortunately, it doesn't seem likely to find an audience anytime soon. "I know just about everyone in the world who's writing about boredom—there's about one in each country," de la Peña tells me. "And they all say the same thing: They were never able to interest any publishers. I'm hoping to open some eyes, but I guess I'm a little pessimistic that [the book is] going to be published in my lifetime." If nothing else, he can look forward to a long, boring wait.

MICHAEL CROWLEY

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In the new issue of the Hoover Digest . . .

China and the Cure for Poverty

Acquiring wealth the old-fashioned way

China is now said to be lifting a million people a month out of poverty. You can bet the rent money that the Left will show little interest in how China is managing this feat. The Left showed far more interest in China back when it was run by Mao in far-left fashion–and when millions of Chinese were starving.

Those of us who are not on the Left ought to take a closer look. After the death of Mao, government controls over the market began to relax–first tentatively, in select places and for select industries. Then, as those places and those industries began to prosper dramatically, similar relaxations of government control took place elsewhere, with similar results.

The Chinese acquired wealth the old-fashioned way: They created it.

—Thomas Sowell

How Tehran Can Yet Be Tamed

Washington should exploit the power struggle now taking place in Iran

On the surface, the regime in Tehran seems to stand together. Behind the scenes, however, a fierce struggle is under way. In one camp are Ahmadinejad and his supporters. In the other, Iran's embattled democratic movement and an array of forces that benefited from the status quo before Ahmadinejad came to power.

How can the United States exploit this struggle?

First, it should isolate Ahmadinejad and his cabal. Second, it should stimulate a serious discussion in Iranian society about the country's security interests. So far the regime has monopolized the discussion. This must end. And third, Bush should endorse the creation of a regional security organization in the Middle East. The more secure Iranians feel, the more likely the emergence of a peaceful, democratic movement.

—Michael McFaul and Abbas Milani

Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

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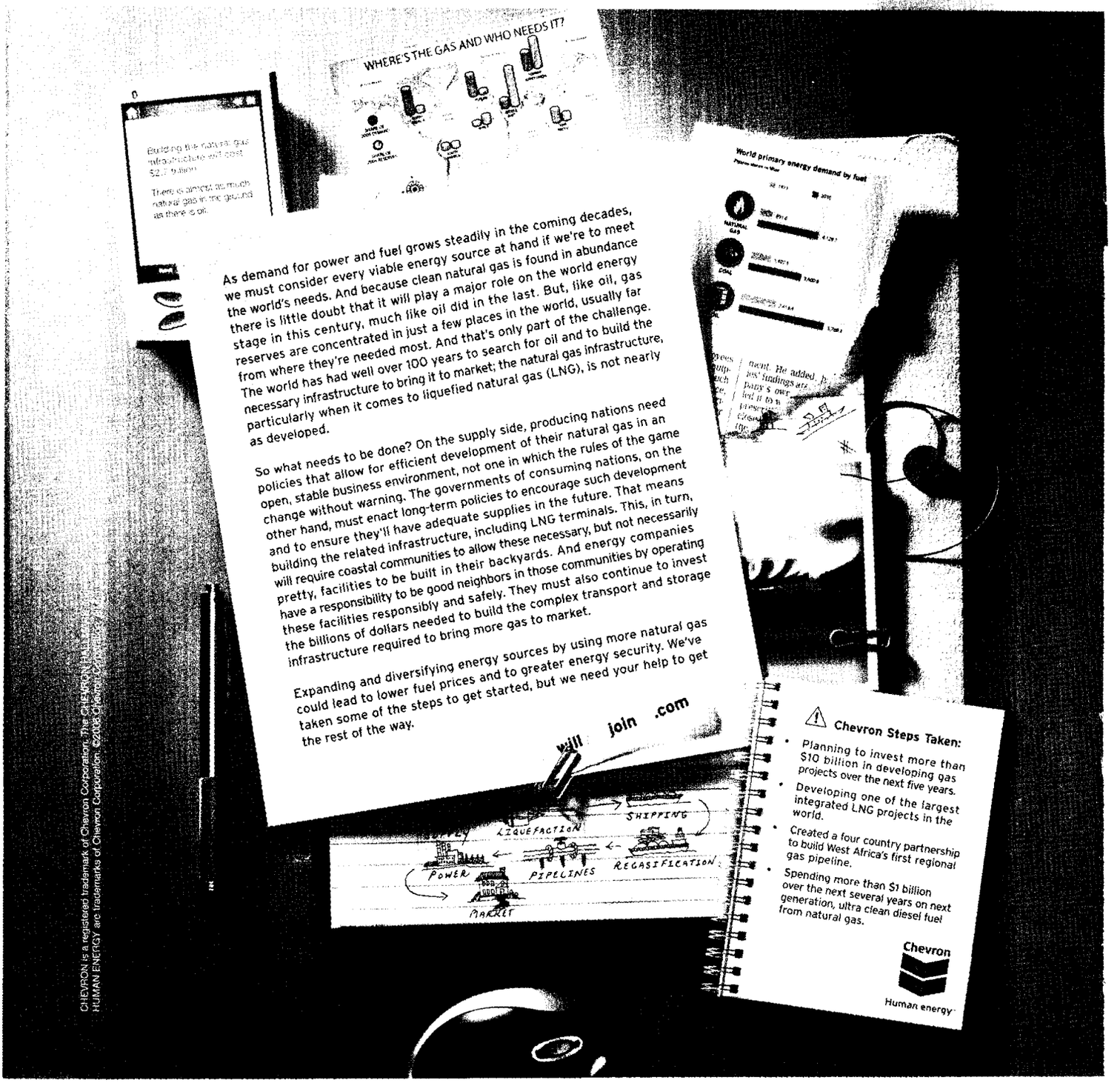
WHERE'S THE GAS AND WHO NEEDS IT?
Building the natural gas infrastructure will cost $2.7 trillion.
There is almost as much natural gas in the ground as there is oil.
World primary energy demand by fuel
NATURAL GAS
COAL
As demand for power and fuel grows steadily in the coming decades, we must consider every viable energy source at hand if we're to meet the world's needs. And because clean natural gas is found in abundance there is little doubt that it will play a major role on the world energy stage in this century, much like oil did in the last. But, like oil, gas reserves are concentrated in just a few places in the world, usually far from where they're needed most. And that's only part of the challenge. The world has had well over 100 years to search for oil and to build the necessary infrastructure to bring it to market; the natural gas infrastructure, particularly when it comes to liquefied natural gas (LNG), is not nearly as developed.
So what needs to be done? On the supply side, producing nations need policies that allow for efficient development of their natural gas in an open, stable business environment, not one in which the rules of the game change without warning. The governments of consuming nations, on the other hand, must enact long-term policies to encourage such development and to ensure they'll have adequate supplies in the future. That means building the related infrastructure, including LNG terminals. This, in turn, will require coastal communities to allow these necessary, but not necessarily pretty, facilities to be built in their backyards. And energy companies have a responsibility to be good neighbors in those communities by operating these facilities responsibly and safely. They must also continue to invest the billions of dollars needed to build the complex transport and storage infrastructure required to bring more gas to market.
Expanding and diversifying energy sources by using more natural gas could lead to lower fuel prices and to greater energy security. We've taken some of the steps to get started, but we need your help to get the rest of the way.
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Chevron Steps Taken:
• Planning to invest more than $10 billion in developing gas projects over the next five years.
• Developing one of the largest integrated LNG projects in the world.
• Created a four country partnership to build West Africa's first regional gas pipeline.
• Spending more than $1 billion over the next several years on next generation, ultra clean diesel fuel from natural gas.
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